# THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY AT WAR

1939-1944

9d NET

# The Australian Army at War

AN OFFICIAL RECORD OF SERVICE
IN TWO HEMISPHERES
1939–1944


LONDON
*Published for the* AUSTRALIAN ARMY STAFF *by*
HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

*Originally published in Australia by the* DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF PUBLIC RELATIONS *under the authority and by direction of* GENERAL SIR THOMAS BLAMEY, G.B.E., K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., E.D., *Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces. Reprinted for the Australian Army Staff by* HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE, LONDON, 1944.

To be purchased from H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at York House, Kingsway London, W.C.2; 13A Castle Street, Edinburgh 2; 39–41 King Street, Manchester 2; 1 St. Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff; 80 Chichester Street, Belfast; or through any bookseller.

Price 9d. net

# FOREWORD

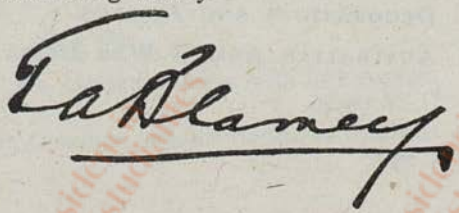
WHILE accompanying the Prime Minister of Australia on his visit to the United Kingdom to attend the Imperial Conference, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff invited me to visit many headquarters, formations and units ; and in so doing I had the pleasure of meeting many British soldiers of all ranks.

In those meetings, I was impressed with the efficiency, spirit and battle fitness of the British Army. I was also agreeably surprised at the keen interest in the Australian Army, which was displayed by all those with whom I came into contact. My personal impression in this matter was supported by the Imperial General Staff, who assured me that this welcome curiosity is very strong.

In common with the other Armies of the Empire, the Australian Military Forces have played, even up to the present, a very much larger and more important part than was contemplated, or thought possible, in the previous years of peace. This part has been played against the German and Italian Armies in Europe and the Middle East, and against Japanese troops in Malaya and the South West Pacific, but it has not been played without great effort or without heavy loss.

The close association of the A.I.F. with the British troops in the Middle East in this war, during the heavy fighting in the Western Desert, in the stern struggles in Greece and Crete, and in Syria and Malaya, has confirmed the great respect and high appreciation of British soldiers by members of the Australian Forces.

We are deeply conscious of the assistance given by the British Army in matters of training and equipment during the early stages of this war, when it could least be spared. I trust, therefore, that this booklet, which presents a few of the salient facts of the history of the Australian Army in this War, will be a means of providing you with a basic knowledge with which to follow the future share of the Australian Army in achieving victory.



*General*
*Commander-in-Chief*
*Australian Military Forces*

*June* 15, 1944

# CONTENTS

# ILLUSTRATIONS

*Between pages* 16 *and* 17

Mr. Churchill and Lieut.-General Morshead in Egypt.
Australian trucks destroyed by German dive bombers in Greece.
Australian convoy passes through village in Greece.
A.I.F. Ski Unit in Syria.

*Between pages* 32 *and* 33

Australians on the Syrian border.
Sallying forth from the Australian perimeter outside Tobruk.
Australian Women's Army Service man the searchlights.
Australian 9th Division parades before Commander-in-Chief General Alexander after Battle of El Alamein.

*Between pages* 40 *and* 41

Hangar at Darwin destroyed in Japanese bombing raids.
Australian Commandos on patrol in Portuguese Timor.
"Diggers" knock out Japanese tanks on road to Singapore.
Wet going in New Guinea.

*Between pages* 56 *and* 57

A New Guinea native who won the M.M. in action against the Japanese.
Japanese prisoner of war in New Guinea.
25-pounder being manhandled through the mud at Langemak Bay, New Guinea.
Wounded Australian passes tank at Satelberg, New Guinea.

## MAPS

# INTRODUCTION

THE *purpose of this publication is to provide a brief, but comprehensive, summary of the service that has been given by the Australian Military Forces in many countries since the outbreak of war on September* 3, 1939.

*It does not set out the sum total of the Australian nation's contribution in lives, service and money to the cause of the United Nations, but is concerned only with the land forces.*

*Nor does it make due acknowledgment of the assistance in men, material and equipment provided for the Australian Army on numerous occasions by*

*The people of the United Kingdom,*
*The Royal Navy,*
*The British Army,*
*The Royal Air Force,*
*The Royal Australian Navy,*
*The Royal Australian Air Force,*
*and*
*The Army, Navy and Air Forces of the United States of America,*

*without whose aid many of the successes of the Australian Military Forces could not have been realised, or could have been achieved only at much greater cost.*

# RECORD OF SERVICE

SINCE September, 1939, Australian soldiers have served in twenty-eight territories, including the following :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| UNITED KINGDOM | MALAYA | PAPUA |
| NORTH AFRICA | CEYLON | NEW GUINEA |
| GREECE | BURMA | DUTCH NEW GUINEA |
| CRETE | CHINA | NEW BRITAIN |
| CYPRUS | JAVA | NEW IRELAND |
| SYRIA | TIMOR | SOLOMON ISLANDS |
| PALESTINE | AMBON | NEW CALEDONIA |
| ERITREA | | NAURU-OCEAN IS. |
| TRANSJORDANIA | | |

In addition, the Australian Army has garrisoned the Australian mainland against the now frustrated threat of Japanese invasion.

The first duty assumed by the Australian Army on the outbreak of war in September, 1939, was the defence of coastal cities—the centres of the Commonwealth's industrial activity—and the principal ports against the possibility of enemy raids.

Voluntary enlistment of an expeditionary force for service anywhere in the world followed immediately, the first formed units being sent to the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

A corps of three divisions was established eventually in the Middle East, and the greater part of a fourth division was sent to Malaya to assist in the garrisoning of that peninsula.

Simultaneously with the voluntary enlistment of these divisions and the necessary reinforcements for overseas service, compulsory call-up of men eligible for service on the Australian mainland and in adjacent territories was effected progressively. Ultimately, the only men aged between 18 and 40 years who were not serving with the Australian forces—sea, land or air—were :

(*a*) Medically unfit ;
(*b*) Engaged in war or other essential industry ; or
(*c*) Persons whose enlistment would have caused hardship substantially in excess of that normally occasioned by military service.

Australian soldiers first became engaged in active operations late in 1940, when one division participated in the first Western Desert offensive.

These troops served later in Greece and Crete.

The other Middle East divisions fought, respectively, in Syria and in the later Western Desert campaigns.

Japan's entry into the war and the rapid development of the threat against Empire territory in the Far East dictated withdrawal progressively of the three divisions from the Middle East.

The 6th Division was the first to leave, and was followed by the 7th Division. The 9th Division did not return until after the battle of El Alamein, by which time the Japanese southward drive had been checked and the process of expelling the Japanese from captured territory had begun.

The original programme for the transfer of these divisions from the Middle East did not contemplate that they should garrison the Australian continent, but that they should be used to stem the Japanese advance through Burma and Malaya, and so provide a barrier which would protect not only India and Australia but also the British and allied territories to the south-east of Asia.

Rapidity of the Japanese advance, however, precluded the execution of this programme.

The troops of the 8th Division were lost—chiefly as prisoners of war—when Singapore fell. Some of the forces returning from the Middle East were diverted to Ceylon ; others were disembarked in Java to aid the Netherlands forces. The remainder were returned to Australia, to learn hurriedly the new technique of jungle warfare, and then to take their place in the field against the Japanese in New Guinea.

## Japan's First Reverse

By the end of February, 1942, within three months of Pearl Harbour, the Japanese threat to the Australian mainland had become menacing.

The enemy's drive had carried him past the Netherlands Indies ; he had taken Dutch Timor and violated Portuguese neutrality by seizing Dilli, only 450 miles from the north-west coast of Australia ; he had reduced the meagre Australian garrison at Rabaul, and had established beach-heads in New Guinea. More ominously, his air force had raided Darwin, and his destruction had been so planned and executed as to leave no doubt that invasion of the mainland was part of his programme.

It was not until late August and early September, 1942, that the Australian Army met the Japanese on reasonably equal terms in numbers and equipment. Then, at Milne Bay, on the eastern tip of New Guinea, Australian troops smashed an attempted landing, and inflicted on the Japanese the first defeat on land which he had

suffered since his attack on Pearl Harbour brought war to the Pacific in December, 1941.

Meanwhile, another Japanese force, overwhelmingly superior in numbers, had been pushing through the Owen Stanley Ranges, but had been checked at Eoribaiwa Ridge, less than 35 air miles from Port Moresby. Within three weeks of their victory at Milne Bay, Australian troops began at Eoribaiwa Ridge the drive which was to clear the Japanese out of Papua, and then out of the greater part of New Guinea.

This involved months of hard fighting in the worst imaginable type of country, where roads were virtually non-existent, and where in the most crucial days every ounce of equipment and food had to be man-handled over slimy, precipitous tracks, through disease-infested tropical jungle.

Here in the jungle of New Guinea, the Australian Army fulfilled the role which had been planned for it in Burma and Malaya. Its victories removed the threat of invasion of Australia, and began the process of rolling the Japanese back through the territories which they had conquered.

This, in brief, is the history of the Australian Army in nearly five years of war. Although there is much to be done, the cost has been heavy, as is shown by the following statement of Army casualties suffered in all theatres of operations in which the Australian soldier has served :

BATTLE CASUALTIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Killed in Action | 5,877 |
| Died of Wounds | 1,454 |
| Died—other causes | 4,414 |
| Total Deaths | 11,745 |
| Wounded in Action | 15,716 |
| Missing | 3,598 |
| Prisoner of War | 25,769 |
| Total Battle Casualties | 56,828 |

# BATTLE RECORD

## NORTH AFRICA

In every Middle East campaign in which they fought Australian troops were associated with British units.

When the first of these Australian troops reached Palestine—in January, 1940—the Maginot Line stood, the Far East was quiescent and a nominally neutral Italy was astride the Mediterranean. It had been planned that, after hardening up in the Middle East, the Australians should go to France, as the first A.I.F. had done.

But conditions and programmes underwent drastic revision in 1940, and in September of that year the available Australians were moved into Egypt.

Supplies presented an acute problem. Hasty improvisation was dictated by the almost disastrous losses of equipment in France and the disruption of Mediterranean shipping on Italy's entry into the war. Australian problems were accentuated by the diversion to the United Kingdom of technical and other troops, necessitating rapid substitution in the Middle East.

Australia reinforced its original division, troops who had been diverted to the United Kingdom were re-directed to the Middle East, and by Christmas, 1940, Australian manpower equivalent to a Corps was spread through Palestine and Egypt.

The Australians were "blooded" in the fighting which followed the capture of Sidi Barrani by the Western Desert Force on December 9, 1940. Between Sidi Barrani and Sollum, the 6th Australian Division relieved the Fourth Indian Division, and became part of the force which faced Bergonzoli and his 45,000 Italians.

Retreating into Libya after their defeat at Sidi Barrani, the Italians grouped themselves at Bardia. There they had defences 11 miles long and five miles deep, the arc perimeter touching the sea north and south of the town. The Italians believed this fortress was impregnable, and had ordered that it be held at all costs.

The untried Australian troops, the British 7th Armoured Division, a machine-gun battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers and British medium artillery attacked at dawn on January 3, 1941.

Bardia fell at 1 p.m. on January 5, and with it 40,000 prisoners, 400 guns, 130 tanks, 700 motor trucks and huge quantities of other material.

## Pursuit

Tobruk was next. There, it was estimated, the enemy had a garrison of 25,000 men. The town fell to British tanks and Australian infantry soon after 10 a.m. on January 22.

From Tobruk, the Australians' first campaign became one of pursuit. This carried the Sixth Division right across Cyrenaica.

Derna fell to them on January 30, after a delaying action by the Italians, and there followed an arduous campaign of skirmishing advances.

Australian cavalry troopers took possession of Cirene, and Barce surrendered to an Australian artillery regiment after a few shells had been fired.

Having travelled 360 miles in little more than a month since their first battle, the Australians accepted the surrender of Benghazi on February 7.

The pursuit ended 75 miles to the south of Benghazi, where the British tanks destroyed what remained of the Italian forces in Cyrenaica.

Our offensive had been carried to the limit, and only a light holding force was maintained forward—a very thin outpost line. German and Italian reinforcements were being poured into Tripoli, but of that fact the Allied command was not then aware.

Meanwhile, because we had been committed to give military support to Greece, 6th Australian Division was withdrawn from the Western Desert to refit for this new expedition. Its place in the desert was taken by 9th Australian Division. In March units which had arrived recently from Great Britain eliminated an Italian desert post at Giarabub.

When it moved into Libya the 9th Division was not equipped for immediate action. It was short of equipment, weapons and vehicles, and its personnel were new to desert warfare. Its intended role was garrison duty while toughening up and equipping itself.

## Withdrawal and Siege

But the Axis was ready to mount a counter-attack, and for that purpose had the greater part of an armoured division in Tripolitania and moving eastward. Opposing them was a sketchily-equipped British armoured force, supported by an immobile and incompletely armed brigade of 9th Division.

The strength of the 9th Division was more nominal than real. One forward brigade had a battalion available, with a second on the way up. Another brigade was more or less complete, but the division controlled no troop-carrying transport. The rest of the

divisional troops were immobile and were back in the Tobruk-Gazala area.

The withdrawal began on March 31, the 9th Division's role being to delay the enemy along the main coastal route. Outnumbered, out-gunned, without adequate armour, and faced constantly with threats of encirclement from the left flank, the 9th withdrew to Tobruk, and there turned at bay. The division, now joined in Tobruk by British units, had performed a remarkable feat of withdrawing 270 miles with relatively light losses.

The old Italian perimeter at Tobruk was developed quickly and ingeniously, while the panzers passed the town, cut the road to Bardia and isolated the garrison. But this garrison of British and Australian troops was inspired by the will to fight, and the Royal Navy kept open the life-line to Egypt.

Little time was given the garrison to prepare its defence, the enemy making his first major attack on April 14. He used 22-ton tanks, which were smashed by concentrated artillery fire.

Many more attacks were made ; all were smashed. The defence was never passive. Fighting patrols went out repeatedly. The enemy was, however, asserting increasingly his aerial superiority. Bombing was almost non-stop, and in one period of 52 days there were 1,431 enemy air sorties over Tobruk, but the incessant bombing failed to close the port.

On May 1, the enemy used 60 tanks and victorious troops from France in another abortive attempt to reduce the fortress.

The 9th's weakness in fire-power was countered by the use of weapons which had been captured from the Italians in the earlier offensive, and the machine-gun became the most used weapon in the area.

Life in Tobruk included patrolling, digging, hours of motionless watching in a world of dust and aridity. Services continued to function under the aerial blitz and long-range bombardment. Although the waterfront was a wreck and the harbour wreck-strewn, supplies, mails and men were brought in, and the wounded evacuated.

Relief came late in the summer of 1941, and included members of the Polish Carpathian Brigade. The command changed from Australian to British, and, unit by unit, most of the 9th Division was withdrawn to Egypt. Many of the Australians had had eight months' service, mostly in the desert " front-line " and on siege rations.

One battalion of Australians remained in Tobruk until it was relieved by British columns from the south. The Australians, physically tired, but with unbroken spirit and with the doctrine of offence thoroughly inculcated, began immediately to re-fit for a new task.

## Final Phase

Australian troops were to see little more of the Western Desert. The 6th Division had already been committed in the campaigns of Greece and Crete. The 7th Division had completed the conquest of Syria.

In the Far East, Japan had struck toward India and Australia. The 6th and 7th were to leave the desert for the jungle. The 9th would remain to play a part in the final great desert offensive, and it, too, would turn to face—and defeat—a new enemy.

El Alamein was a British Eighth Army "show," but the Australian Ninth Division—the "Rats of Tobruk"—was honoured to play a part in that greatest of desert battles. Four times the tide of battle had surged across Libya before the British Forces launched the fifth and decisive drive to clear the Axis powers finally from Africa. The Battle of El Alamein was a fitting prelude to the last battle—the Cyrenaican campaign.

July saw a change in the pattern of the war in North Africa. Up to that time the Axis had achieved a spectacular success by the rapid reconquest of Cyrenaica and subsequent advance into Egypt. The arrival of the Australian and New Zealand divisions, fresh from training in Northern Syria, had enabled the initiative again to pass to us. By the end of July the 9th Division had participated in four actions and a wedge had been driven between the enemy flank and the sea. The front had been stabilised, and from offence the enemy had reverted to defence.

The period of comparative quiet was broken on August 31, when the enemy flung four armoured columns against the southern flank of the Eighth Army. The attack was expected, and was met with confident defence. This was only one instance of the enemy sparring to find out what was what in the British lines and beyond.

The heaviest artillery concentration seen in Africa opened the British offensive on the night of October 23. It was the curtain-raiser to the break-through at El Alamein, which is one of the most cherished battle honours of the Australian Army.

It also gave the starter's signal for the tanks to roll and the infantry to smash forward. Attack, counter-attack and attack again was the order of the British advance until the end of October.

Then on the night of November 1-2 the determined effort to break through the German line was launched. The enemy could not take the pressure and the break through was finally effected on November 4, when the Armoured Corps passed through the German line in pursuit of the Axis armies.

That was the conclusion of twelve days of intensive fighting for

the Ninth Australian Division, engaged throughout on a divisional front. The enemy resistance had been crushed and his efforts were directed at extricating as much of his battered force as possible.

The importance of the Ninth Australian Divisional role in relation to that of the Eighth Army was based largely on the defensive strategy which it had been assumed the enemy would, and, in fact, did, adopt. It was obvious that he meant to resist any advance along the coastal sector—and that is where the Australian Division was placed.

Of the part the Australians played in the Battle of El Alamein the British official report states :

> " The Ninth Australian Division put up a magnificent effort. They fought themselves and the enemy to a standstill, till flesh and blood could stand no more. Then they went on fighting."

El Alamein was the last action in which Australians fought in the Middle East. They returned to Australia early in the following year to join their comrades in the war against the Japanese in the Pacific.

## GREECE

*The Greek campaign of April,* 1941, *was a sacrifice undertaken resolutely because of the British Empire's guarantee to support Greek independence.*

Principal elements of the force sent into Greece under Lieut.-General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson were the British 7th Armoured Brigade, 2nd New Zealand Division and 6th Australian Division. In fact, however, the expeditionary force comprised less than half the forces which it had been intended to send into Greece.

Air support was limited, and the expected substantial additions did not materialise.

The Australian and New Zealand Divisions were formed later into a Corps, the command of which was given to General Sir Thomas Blamey. Early in the campaign he planned a series of rearguard actions to harass and delay a much stronger enemy, while, at the same time, avoiding encirclement and destruction.

That is, in fact, the tactical story of the Australian operations in Greece—a series of rearguard actions covering withdrawals against a much stronger force highly mechanised and with domination of the air. These tactics were always successful. The Germans were never able to pin down our forces and force them into undesired battle.

Only a small amount of shipping was available to carry the troops from Africa to Greece, but not a soldier's life was lost in the protracted process, although a strong Italian naval force sought to intercept the convoys.

The Germans broke through the boundary of Greece and Yugoslavia on April 6, swept south and captured Salonika within a few days. Collapse of Yugoslavia left not only the Thracian boundary of Greece vulnerable but also its northern front, where the only protection was provided by weak and ill-equipped reserve forces.

This enabled the Germans to concentrate the whole of their force against the small command of Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, and to attack from both the north and east. The northern flank was open through Yugoslavia and the Germans were able to deploy on the plain north of the broad Monastir gap. It led directly into central Greece in rear of our forces, who held the line of the Axios and the Passes.

With the defection of Yugoslavia, the only course open to the British forces was to attempt to block the broad Monastir area against the Germans moving through Yugoslavia. All available troops were posted at the Veve Pass, the objective being to hold the enemy, if possible, long enough to enable our forces on the Katerina-Verria-Edessa line to move into stronger positions. Two Australian battalions, a British battalion, New Zealand machine gunners and British and Australian artillery comprised this delaying force, which faced two armoured and one motorised division. One battalion held four miles of front and had nothing behind it.

The Greek forces were not armed, equipped or modernised in a manner which would permit them to meet the highly trained German divisions. Some of the reserve Greek divisions had few guns, and these were bullock drawn.

British motorised units on April 9 penetrated to Monastir, in Yugoslavia, and shot up the Nazis in the town, but the German advance went on.

The first real clash came on Good Friday, April 11, and was sustained on the following day, when the Germans sent in the Adolf Hitler S.S. Division supported by tanks. Although British and Australian artillery did deadly work, the weight of the German attack told and the enemy broke through. Fierce local counter-attacks could not drive him out. Infiltration now was inescapable, and there was no defence in depth simply because there were not sufficient troops available. The line broke at 5 p.m. and the Australians were ordered to withdraw. Fighting desperately, small rearguard parties were overrun, but the bulk of the force made an orderly withdrawal, having gained the time necessary to permit the

main force to retire to positions where they could take the next blow.

High in the Verria Pass a brigade of the 6th Division opposed a strong German column including tanks, until finally the brigade had to move on foot to new positions 50 to 70 miles across the mountains.

The Anzac Corps came into being on April 12. On the following night the force had withdrawn to the Olympus-Ilomanika line. This was a strong defensive location, but required a far greater force than was available or likely to be available to hold it.

By now the Greek army had reached the end of its reserves. There were few British aeroplanes in the area and the enemy air force was appearing in increasing numbers. The British Armoured Brigade had fought gallantly, but it had ceased to exist as a fighting force.

The Ilomanika line allowed the force to re-assemble, but it was beyond its numerical capacity to retain this extensive position against the advancing hordes. The pass of Thermopylae was selected as the only possible position from which the immensely superior enemy numbers could be held. The retirement to this position began on April 15, when reports were received that the Greeks were about to seek an armistice, with the consequent risk of leaving open the left flank of the Empire forces.

The enemy had begun to probe strongly down the coast past Mt. Olympus and into the Peneios Gorge, where he had an armoured division and a motorised division. In the face of these numbers, two battalions of Australians and a New Zealand battalion were ordered to hold on until April 19 to cover the main withdrawal through Larissa. The enemy began his attack on April 17, throwing two divisions, with tanks, against the three Dominion battalions. They held the enemy until the following night, when the new withdrawal began.

One Australian battalion, cut off from Larissa, withdrew to the mountainous country to the south, and in small parties made its way to the coast. Some were captured, but a surprisingly large number reached safety. A substantial party, disciplined and in the command of its own officers, arrived in Palestine months afterwards. The other Australian battalion rejoined the main force after by-passing Larissa, and took up positions on the Thermopylae line.

At Peneios the defending forces held the enemy on the right until the main Empire forces could clear the Larissa area in the withdrawal to Thermopylae, probably the most difficult action of the campaign, but one which never got out of control.

British, Australian and New Zealand units were now converging on the one road running south from Larissa. The road was strafed

Mr. Churchill and Lieut.-General Morshead in Egypt.

**Australian** trucks destroyed by German dive bombers in Greece.

Australian convoy passes through village in Greece.

A.I.F. Ski Unit in Syria.

continuously by German planes. Heavy traffic could be sent along only at night. There were many hold-ups, but control was strict and traffic did not become disorganised.

The Thermopylae line was manned by April 20. Here again, a sound line and good soldiers were not enough. On the same day the R.A.F. had fought its last battle in Greece. The following day the Greek Army in Epinus capitulated, and the left flank of the Thermopylae line was wide open.

The Germans massed big forces with tanks in full view, but out of range, of the defenders of the Thermopylae line. Other German divisions were hurrying down the west coast to cut our line of retirement at Corinth. In view of the numbers at the enemy's command, it was only a matter of time before he could find a way through. With his control of the skies, ships could take off troops only at night and they had to be clear of the coast by daylight if they expected to survive.

The main evacuation was carried out on April 24, 25, 26 and 27. The troops thinned out from Thermopylae and elsewhere and moved at night. During the day they hid off the road, under trees and in olive groves. Trucks and equipment, which could not be carried, were damaged beyond repair.

On the night of April 26-27, 16,000 men were withdrawn safely, but the Germans were moving closer, and after one attack on the Corinth bridge had failed they used paratroops. The bridge, however, was destroyed, and its use denied them.

On April 28 a German column broke through to Kalami on the south coast, seized the port and set up a defence perimeter. A counter-attack succeeded, but in the meantime contact with the Navy was lost, and with that loss of contact, the planned evacuation ended, although for several subsequent nights destroyers and cruisers crept in to take off large and small parties.

The 6th Division came out an intact formation, with unexpectedly light casualties, to fight again in Crete, and later still in the South-West Pacific Area.

## CRETE

*Crete was never prepared for the blitz to which it was subjected.*

Australian troops evacuated from Greece began to arrive in Crete on April 25. Many were sent on to Egypt, but only about 50 per cent. of those who remained in the island were able to take an active combatant part in the action that was to follow.

With the indications pointing to massed air invasion, preceded by air bombardment, it was decided to group the defences at Heraklion,

on the east-central portion of the north coast, and at Retimo and Suda Bay. British and Australian troops were allotted to Heraklion, an Australian force to cover the landing ground at Retimo, and a possible landing ground and beach at Georgioupolis, and New Zealanders and Australians to Suda Bay, Canea and Melame.

Royal Marines reinforcements were brought in during the next few days, and some non-essential personnel evacuated, but German domination of the air precluded the provision of essential armament.

The first test came on May 20. The air offensive opened at 8 a.m., a large part of the A.A. artillery being put out of action. Paratroops followed, and troop-carrying gliders were released between Melame and Canea. Most of the estimated 3,500 paratroops landed within our defence lines, and were killed.

The enemy, however, directed heavy bombing against Heraklion and Retimo. He dropped 3,000 more paratroops, 1,000 of them at Retimo. In the first three days, all but 200 of those at Retimo were killed, and a similar proportion at Heraklion, where a fierce defence was maintained.

But a foothold had been gained. More paratroops were thrown into the areas not dominated by our troops. However great the cost, the Germans were getting in and taking cover until night.

At Canea the enemy attack was held until the sixth day, but he broke through then toward Suda Bay. Although cut off from the command, Retimo and Heraklion still held. A bayonet charge at Canea, before which the enemy broke and ran, served but to delay the inevitable.

Despite successful resistance, both the Heraklion and Retimo forces were compelled to give way to the German weight. The former garrison was evacuated on May 29, but at Retimo only a few escaped, the majority being overwhelmed after the Suda Bay force fell back, to attempt the long march across to the southern coast.

The enemy pressed close upon the retiring troops, who were making for the point of embarkation at the tiny village of Sphakia. Two tanks and some carriers helped delay the enemy, whose motor cycle patrols were often within a mile of our rearguard, but water was short, and men were exhausted after ten almost sleepless days.

On May 30-31 an Australian battalion took up a holding role on a ridge over the beach at Sphakia. Their ammunition and rations were short. Behind them British, New Zealand and Australian troops, many of them unarmed, were bottle-necked on the one narrow track through the village.

Not all could be taken off, despite the magnificent work of the

Royal Navy. The rearguard battalion, still a disciplined, organised force, was among those left behind.

The story of Crete is the story of enemy air domination. Because of that he was able, despite appalling losses, to put into effect the parachute technique of "vertical envelopment," and his invasion was bound to succeed.

## SYRIA

*Reverses in Greece and Crete were followed by a rapid and outstanding success in Syria.*

The 7th Australian Division and a brigade group from 6th Division, with British, Indian and Free French forces forestalled the Axis in Syria and preserved the integrity of that country against enemy infiltration.

Here again, the advantage of terrain and equipment was with our enemy. In parts the coastal plain was little more than a few hundred yards wide, and mountains lay across our other ways of advance. The enemy had tanks ; we had few.

To forestall the Axis, we had to advance along three main lines. One force took the main coastal road running from the Palestine frontier to Beirut ; the second inland into the mountains from Metulla in the direction of Merjayoun ; the third toward Damascus.

The Australian contingents moved from Palestine during the night of June 7-8, one taking the coastal road and the other moving inland from Metulla.

Crossing of the Litani river was stubbornly contested, but here Australian artillery drove off Vichy destroyers which had come close in-shore to shell our positions. Beyond the Litani engagements became ragged ; stalking and fighting at close quarter in ravines followed.

Merjayoun was left undefended in a withdrawal, but Vichy troops fought back again in a bitter action. Australians, meanwhile, were pushing into the mountains toward Jezzine, switching from their carriers to captured horses. Mule and donkey trains had to be used to meet the supply problem ; hidden machine-gun posts had to be stalked patiently.

The third line of advance into Syria was carried steadily by British, Indian, Free French and some Australian troops. Damascus was its first objective. The fall of Qouneitra and the taking of Sheik Miskin forced the Vichy troops back along the Damascus road. Here our artillery took toll of the enemy armour.

The fate of Damascus was sealed when an Australian battalion,

assigned the task of cutting the Damascus-Beirut road, stormed high ground west of Mezze and occupied the forts there after overcoming stiff resistance. Damascus surrendered on June 21.

Our attack turned now toward the coast and Beirut, but Vichy troops in the Jebel Mazar held us up and made necessary an outflanking movement.

Influx of British mechanised units, and the wresting of air control from Vichy changed the complexion of the campaign.

A suggestion to General Dentz, the Vichy commander, that he should seek an armistice was rejected, and the assault on Damour was begun. With a small force of Australians astride the road beyond the city, the navy bombarded the coastal defences, and Vichy gave ground as our troops pressed along the highway. On the inland flank the fighting consisted mainly of grim scrambles and duels, under pressure of which the enemy broke.

Damour fell on July 9. General Dentz sued for an armistice, which was signed within the Australian lines. Fighting ceased at 1 a.m. on July 12.

## MALAYA

*Withdrawal in Malaya was forced upon the land forces by dire necessity against an enemy of superior strength, whose air force had virtual command of the sky, whose knowledge of the jungle was complete, and whose agents were behind our lines.*

The war in Malaya was five weeks old before the 8th Australian Division was committed to battle. Within the first week of the Japanese attack on December 8, 1941, Penang had been evacuated, and withdrawal had begun down the main north-south road of the peninsula.

The Japanese programme was encirclement of our forces, either by boat at night down the coast, or by infiltration through the jungle. When cut off, troops fought back to resume contact—most of the time strafed and bombed from the air.

The two brigades and ancillary troops which comprised the Australian forces were at battle stations in the Mersing area, on the north-east coast, where sea invasion was expected. The Japanese, however, struck far to the north across the peninsula to Penang, and moved down the west coast.

It was at the important railway centre of Gemas, 150 miles north-west of Singapore, that the Australians first saw action. Their positions were located among young rubber trees in fairly open and hilly ground. There the Japanese walked into a trap in which,

it was estimated, more than 1,000 Japanese were killed, and ten enemy tanks destroyed.

A plan to draw the Japanese down to the main defended positions, where an Indian division was preparing, went astray when the enemy used the Muar River and threatened to cut the main road sixty miles behind the Australian position at Gemas.

One battalion was rushed 100 miles round to the Muar River to hold the Japanese. It was in battle within half an hour of its arrival and suffered severe casualties in some of the fiercest fighting of the campaign. Again, however, the Japanese tanks fell into ambush and ten of them were destroyed in less than half an hour.

The enemy then swept his main attack from Gemas to the Muar bridgehead, where by the evening of January 19, he had effected a crossing, and, with advantage in numbers, badly mauled an Australian battalion which was encircled, driving a wedge between the forward battalion and its support. Aerial bombing smashed the Australian transport, and the forward battalion was ordered to withdraw. Only a quarter of that battalion strength got through what was described as " the murderous mile " to its support area.

The following night, the Australians, now numbering less than 1,000, and the Indian troops who were with them, were surrounded by an enemy force known to number 15,000. Ammunition was scarce, medical supplies were running out, and there was no prospect of outside help. Determined to withdraw, the Australians cleared stretches of the road by a succession of bayonet charges. Hundreds of Japanese dead were left across the roadway and in the rubber plantations. The Japanese again cut the road, and seized the Parit-Sulong bridge. The ambush attempt failed, as did the first Australian attack.

The Japanese were using tanks on both sides of the Australians, but the latter, bluffing the enemy into believing they were launching a counter-attack in strength, induced his hurried withdrawal to the east, and so opened a narrow gap along the Sempang River. The Australians pushed through this gap, and eventually a small force of 400 reached the safety of our own lines. Individual soldiers, cut off by clashes with enemy patrols, hid in the jungle by day, and at night laboriously made their way back to our lines.

Although they had failed in their attempt to annihilate the Australians, and despite severe losses in killed and wounded, the Japanese were strong enough to push to Batu Pahat, on the west coast south of Muar. Again they resorted to by-passing by sea. The Australians at Gemas now had no option but to withdraw from their defences without further fighting. This exposed the remaining Australian forces at Mersing, who also had to be withdrawn.

During the last week of January, the main forces in the mainland withdrew to Singapore Island. Use of reinforcements had enabled the Australian units to be restored to full strength, but the new arrivals were only partly trained.

Australian battalions were given the west part of the island to defend, but lacking the concealment of the jungle and the rubber plantations they were at an ever more serious disadvantage than previously from attacks by the enemy air force. The Japanese airmen were able to observe the Australian positions so clearly that they prepared maps showing the positions of every one of our mortars, machine-guns, searchlights and field guns. When their bombardment began they destroyed every beach-light and gun in the sector.

For a week after the withdrawal to the island there was a lull. On the night of February 8-9, the Japanese started their attack, supported by intense gunfire. The front was too wide for so small a defending force, and the Australian line was completely overwhelmed.

Again compelled to withdraw, the Australians formed a perimeter against which the Japanese launched one futile attack after another. There were about 4,500 troops within the perimeter, but very few of them were fighting troops, and only twenty per cent. of the original Australian forces were now effective. The Japanese had control of the water supply. By February 13, their artillery was ranged on the city, and their airplanes had undisputed command of the air.

Nevertheless, the perimeter was still being held against increasing weight of Japanese assaults when the Command capitulated.

## JAVA

*With the collapse of Singapore and the swift Japanese drive towards Java, Australian troops returning from the Middle East were diverted to Java to support the Netherlands forces who were fighting there, supported by small contingents of British and American troops.*

The Australians brought in direct were reinforced by small bands of men who had escaped from Singapore, reached Sumatra and eventually found their way to Java. It was a mixed force, comprising, in the main, a machine-gun battalion, a field company of engineers, a battalion of pioneers, a casualty clearing station, reserve motor transport and details.

The Japanese launched their attack on Java on the night of

February 28-March 1, landing at Rembang and Indrameyu on the eastern coast, while a third landing was made on the north-western tip in the Bantam district, the objective being the capture of Batavia.

The Australian force's role was to meet the enemy descending on Batavia and protect adjacent aerodromes. Contact was made on March 2, and three days later it was reported that the Australians had had some success against the invaders. It was short-lived success, however, because on the following day the Netherlands communique announced the withdrawal from Batavia.

Simultaneously with that announcement came the news that the Japanese had reached and taken Kalidjati aerodrome, 40 miles from Bandoeng. With the loss of this aerodrome went air support for the defending troops.

Units able to withdraw from Batavia area and fall back to Bandoeng set up a new line in the hills and held out until March 9 in the face of superior weight of numbers and continuous air attack.

The Japanese claimed that organised resistance ended at 10 a.m. on March 9, but it is known that powerful armed bands of men continued to wage a guerrilla war in the mountains in much the same way as similar bands survived in Malaya and Sumatra.

## TIMOR

*Four days after the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbour, Australia sent such forces as she could spare to assist the Dutch in holding Timor, the strategic importance of which is apparent from the fact that it is within* 450 *miles of the Australian north-west.*

The bulk of this Australian force was located at Koepang, where there were also Dutch troops and an R.A.A.F. formation—a small Allied post in the path of the Japanese flood coming down from the north.

From Koepang, Netherlands East Indian troops and an Australian Independent Company left shortly afterwards for Dilli, capital of Portuguese Timor, it having become quite apparent that the Japanese would not respect Portuguese neutrality.

The first air raid against Koepang was made on January 26, 1942. It was followed three days later by another raid, and thereafter raids became a daily visitation. In the middle of February, a Japanese convoy came down the coast, and, after aircraft had concentrated on and destroyed the small coast artillery battery, between 600 and 700 paratroops were dropped and attempted to seize Koepang radio station and the aerodrome at Penfoie.

While a small garrison of Dutch and Australian troops was

engaged in rounding up the paratroops, a Japanese transport steamed into the bay and thousands more Japanese were landed in small boats. The total Japanese invasion force was 25,000. Bitter fighting was maintained for days, but here again the Allied troops faced the impossible problem of enemy superiority in numbers.

Australian engineers as a last resort put into effect the plans for the demolition of the radio station, destruction of bombs and artillery ammunition dumps, petrol and Penfoie drome.

Resistance was carried on in the mountain country behind Koepang and there patrols gave the Japanese no rest. Communication with Australia had been lost and could not be restored, so the troops were divided into small parties, some of which reached the coast, while others—Dutch as well as Australian—made their way into Portuguese Timor, where they joined up with the Independent Company which had been sent to Dilli in December.

## Portuguese Timor

The role of the small party of Australians which entered Portuguese Timor was to prepare to deny the Japanese, if and when they violated Portuguese neutrality, the use of the aerodrome and other facilities at Dilli. The first task, therefore, was to prepare the airfield for demolition. Other Australians took up positions in the hills behind the town, while the Netherlands Forces prepared beach defences, although no protracted defence of the area had been contemplated.

Portuguese reinforcements were on the way in February, 1942, and it was projected that the defences which had been prepared should be handed over to them, enabling the Australian and Netherlands troops to withdraw. The Japanese got in first, however, and on the night of February 19-20—the first air raid on Darwin was made on February 19—they landed near Dilli. The Portuguese convoy which was on the way turned back.

The Japanese landing west of Dilli was resisted by the Australians, who fought until dawn, and then blew up the aerodrome and retired into the hills. Against this enemy force of 5,000, the Australians, in six hours' fighting, lost only two men.

For some days the Australians patrolling in the hills, made no real contact with the enemy ; then, after a brush with a Japanese convoy on February 28, the enemy set out to eliminate our forces. His first mission comprised 600 troops, who were resisted by individual platoons, and general skirmishing developed in the hills.

The Australians now assumed the role pre-determined for them —harassing the enemy. Their communications were cut. They

had to leave much of their equipment in the hills and sheer weight of numbers in his favour should have guaranteed the enemy early success.

Early in March, patrols from this small force contacted Australians who had made their escape from Koepang, and learnt from them that the Japanese had landed there the invasion force of 25,000. This meant that the Australians in Portuguese Timor were virtually isolated on an island substantially occupied by the enemy.

From the day of the Japanese landing, February 19, the Australians in Timor had been out of communication with Australia. They had no knowledge of the extent to which the Japanese occupation extended, or whether they would be assured of supplies and reinforcements in the future. A radio transmitter was built from scraps gathered from different parts of the island, some parts being removed under the eyes of the Japanese, whose fuel dumps were raided for kerosene and diesel oil necessary to operate the charger.

Darwin was contacted on April 19. It was then that Australia learnt that the force was intact, still fighting on, but needed boots, medical supplies and ammunition.

In the meantime, the Japanese had begun a drive into the hills, which they sustained for 20 days, in the hope of eliminating the Australians. They drove the Australians from the vicinity of the road, but on April 26 gave up the pursuit, in which they had paid heavily in lives. Ambushes and success in the exploits of snipers caused heavy casualties among the enemy. Living was hard, and danger was constant, and the camps had to be shifted frequently.

Supplies came in soon after radio communication was resumed with Darwin. Later, sick and wounded were evacuated by sea, relieving the strain on the make-shift hospital which the guerrillas had established from time to time in the mountains. The staff and patients had to be moved 15 times as the Japanese made their repeated attempts to clear the territory. On some occasions the sick and wounded were carried out in dive-bombing or machine-gun fire as encirclement was attempted.

One of the activities of the Independent Company was the establishment of a training school to fit the men who had escaped from Dutch Timor to take their part in the harassing war against the Japanese.

This force of something less than 400 men defied a total Japanese force of about 15,000, carried out aggressive raids against enemy posts in occupied centres, ambushed patrols, stalked and sniped.

On August 10, 1942, the Japanese began their biggest attempt to destroy the small Australian force. They sent out about 2,500 men in four drives, two from Dilli, one from Atamboea and one sea-borne

on the south coast and landed at Beco. Supplementing these drives, they carried out much heavy bombing of the mountain areas where they believed our troops to be concentrated.

One of the two Japanese transports used for the sea-borne movement was sunk by Hudson bombers sent out from Darwin in response to a radio call, and it is thought that the second transport was sunk later in the day.

The column which moved out of Dilli was repeatedly ambushed for 10 days, at the end of which the Japanese turned back. The other Japanese drives were equally unsuccessful, and the total Australian losses in the whole action were three men killed.

Reinforcements were landed in September, and thereafter the Japanese, apparently accepting as inevitable their failure to eliminate the Australian forces, resorted to political activity among the natives to win them away from the Australians. This campaign had some effect and the Japanese, who at one time had been pinned down to occupation of the township of Dilli, began to spread out into what the Australians regarded as their territory. Eventually, in January, 1943, the Australians were relieved.

In the face of enemy occupation and strength, this small force had organised and maintained itself in the most primitive conditions, outwitting and taking severe toll of an enemy vastly superior in fire power and numbers.

## NEW BRITAIN

*Rabaul, which was to become later one of the major Japanese bases in the South-West Pacific Area, was thinly garrisoned by Australian troops—probably not more than about* 1,500 *men.*

The Japanese invasion actually began on January 20, 1942, when 150 planes attacked the Lakunai and Vunakanau aerodromes, on each arm of Rabaul's harbour. The aerial defence of this post consisted of seven Wirraways, Australian-made type of advanced trainer. All were shot or forced down.

Two days later, Japanese planes dive-bombed into rubble and scrap metal the two big naval guns guarding the wide mouth of Blanche Bay. At 2.35 a.m. on January 23, the firing of a Verey light announced the invasion, which was effected from six large transports.

Few of the first wave of Japanese troops got ashore. Many of the landing craft were blown out of the water by mortar bombs, but the enemy, having established the centres of our resistance, dive-bombed them later in the morning.

It is estimated that against our original garrison of 1,500, the

Japanese landed that day 17,000 men in the immediate vicinity of Rabaul. He used 40 vessels of all types, and these were supported by 80 planes, mostly dive-bombers and fighters.

In the face of these numbers, the Australian garrison was compelled to withdraw, but before doing so they left between 3,000 and 4,000 Japanese dead on the shores of the bay and the harbour. The withdrawing force split into groups and lived on the run.

In his effort to close the avenues of escape, the Japanese commander sent destroyers steaming up and down the coast, smashing all the boats that could be found. But they overlooked some, and these small vessels ran the gauntlet of the Japanese patrol to return a large proportion of the original garrison to Australian territory.

That, in brief, is the story of Rabaul, which was repeated in lesser degree on other islands caught in the path of the Japanese flood, when outposts—garrisoned lightly as was dictated by Australia's small resources and manpower—were caught, as the world was caught. Among them were Kavieng, Gasmata, Ambon and the Celebes.

## NEW GUINEA

*The several campaigns which have been fought in New Guinea, principally by the Australian Army, have marked the turning point in the war against Japan. It was in New Guinea, or geographically more accurate, Papua, that Australian troops, supported by Australian airmen, inflicted on the Japanese the first clear cut defeat in land operations in this war. It was in Papua that the Japanese advance was stopped and within a few weeks converted into a defeat, since when the Japanese forces have not recorded a single success against the Australian Army.*

The merit of these initial Australian successes, the first at Milne Bay and the second in the Owen Stanleys, following earlier reverses, is that they were achieved against weight of numbers and equipment and by troops who only then were learning the lessons of jungle fighting, in which the Japanese had been trained for a very long time.

The fighting in New Guinea is not comparable with any actions that have taken place anywhere in the world. The Australian Army had to fight not only the Japanese, but also the country, and at the most critical stages it had to fight without the equipment and supplies which alone should have made victory certain.

The lessons of jungle fighting were learnt by the Australians as they withdrew fighting through the Owen Stanleys. They learnt the

hard way, and immediately adapted themselves to the new conditions of warfare. It was this ready adaptation that gave them the credit for the first victories on land against the Japanese.

The fight against the country involved the continual adaptation of military equipment, the introduction of new ideas, the re-casting of training programmes. Practically all of these demands were met from Australia's own resources. The khaki uniform of the Western Desert, and of tradition, gave place to the jungle green, the shorts of other battle areas were scrapped for the long, mosquito-proof trousers. Ration scales were completely recast. Equipment was lightened. Everything had to be done on foot, so mobility was determined not by the most modern developments of transport, but by the endurance of the individual.

But the campaigns, despite the innumerable innovations, did establish that the basic training which was undergone by the Australian soldier, whether he was to fight in jungles or the desert or in the role that was not realised—Europe—was the right training.

The Japanese made their first attack against New Guinea on January 21, 1942, when 100 planes attacked Lae and Salamaua, but his land forces did not enter the territory until March 7, when 3,000 men were landed at Lae. He did not immediately attempt the conquest of the island, but on July 21 he landed troops at Buna and Gona on the north coast, in preparation for a drive through the Owen Stanleys to Port Moresby. The vital stage of the New Guinea campaign dates from that time.

The Japanese, it has since been established, had planned a triple drive which was intended to take him to Port Moresby, the last outpost beyond the Australian continent, and at that time defended by only two brigades of partly trained and inadequately equipped troops, much of whose time was necessarily devoted to road making and the unloading of ships.

The Japanese programme set September 21, 1942, as the day on which Port Moresby was to fall. The first stage in the programme was the drive through the Owen Stanleys from Buna and Gona ; the second was to have been the capture of Milne Bay, to be followed by a drive along the south coast ; and the third was a naval movement against Port Moresby.

The first drive was stopped at Eoribaiwa Ridge, within 35 air miles of Port Moresby. The Milne Bay landing was routed by Australian troops at the end of August and early September, 1942. The naval programme was smashed by the success of the Allies in the Battle of the Coral Sea, in which the forces were predominantly American, but were supported by Australian naval units.

The Japanese never recovered from those three blows. Those of his landing force who survived the killing at Milne Bay fled, but the considerably greater force which he had at Gona, Sanananda and Buna fought for nearly four months with a fanatical tenacity that was not subsequently so apparent.

The next stage in the New Guinea campaign was an unsuccessful attempt by the Japanese to capture Wau, in the rich gold mining area, and the centre of the resistance which had kept the Japanese pinned down in a comparatively small area around Lae and Salamaua.

This phase was followed by a deliberately planned campaign of seven months, in which the Japanese was encouraged to feed some of his best troops through Lae and Salamaua into the mountain wilderness towards Wau. A heavy toll was taken by comparatively small Australian forces operating in the area.

The seven months' campaign was a prelude to the most spectacular undertaking in the South-West Pacific Area. It involved the employment of all services, land, sea and air—an amphibious operation on one hand—employment of paratroops and an aerial movement on the other. Primary objective was the capture of Lae and ultimately the clearing of the Japanese from the Huon Peninsula, the Markham and Ramu Valleys. Unqualified success of this phase made possible the American activity against New Britain, led to the clearing of the greater part of the northern coast of New Guinea, and opened the way for the later American operations against Hollandia and adjacent points of Japanese concentration.

The New Guinea campaigns over a period of more than two years, involved the employment of the equivalent of probably up to ten Divisions of Australian troops. Obviously, all these troops were not engaged with the enemy at any one time, a large proportion of them, because of the nature of the country, had to be used to supply and service the men actually in the field.

## MILNE BAY

*The Milne Bay battle knocked the first chip out of the Japanese war sword. It was there that he suffered his first reverse on land, and it was there that he was first compelled to recall any local campaign.*

It was while the Japanese were making their way over the Owen Stanley Range toward Port Moresby that they attempted the seizure of Milne Bay. We had garrisoned that area with one brigade only a few weeks before the Japanese attempt. In July, 1942, the R.A.A.F. had sent in a couple of Kittyhawk fighter squadrons. Little more than a week before the Japanese attempted the landing

a second brigade was sent in, and the Australian command which defeated the Japanese took over less than a week before the action.

Local defences were negligible, roads sank into the mud almost as soon as they were made, the one usable airstrip was far from the best.

The Japanese were over-confident and it seems probable that the commander of the invasion force actually landed the troops some miles east of where he intended. The country here was thick with jungle and the soakage from the mountain kept the ground soft and treacherous.

First warning of the Japanese programme was received on August 24, when it was reported that seven Japanese barges were moving down the Papuan coast. Milne Bay was air-raided that day, and on the following day a convoy of nine ships was seen coming from Rabaul. One ship was sunk by the R.A.A.F., but the convoy continued. The R.A.A.F. sank the barges which were coming down the coast. At midnight on August 25, the Japanese were landed from power barges on the north shore of the bay.

First contact between Australians and the enemy occurred when two platoons returning by launch ran into a Japanese barge and were shot up with machine-guns from the shore. Next contact was east of what was known as KB Mission, at 1.30 a.m., soon after which two Japanese medium tanks came down the narrow road along the edge of the water, using headlights and spot lights and firing as they drove forward. The most formidable anti-tank weapons possessed by the Australians they encountered were hand grenades. Fighting continued until dawn, when the Japanese took refuge in the jungle to rest, and the Australians still held the mission.

An Australian advance in the middle of the afternoon, supported by 25-pounders, was not sustained, and by dawn on August 27, the Japanese had passed the mission.

That night, and on the following nights, Japanese warships came into the bay and shelled the Australian positions. The chief success was the sinking of one cargo ship.

On August 27, the enemy raided the airstrip, but Australian fighters and anti-aircraft guns brought down ten planes.

The Japanese land forces were still hidden in the jungle. Fresh Australian troops recovered the ground lost in the KB Mission area, to be attacked within an hour by Japanese in small parties, supported by tanks.

Use of spot lights by the tanks was a new feature of this warfare, which made it possible for the Japanese to inflict substantial casualties, causing the Australians to withdraw through the jungle.

The Japanese were held before they could seize the airstrip, and the battle remained relatively static for three days. The enemy could not pass the strip defences, and the Australians were becoming

more aggressive with patrols into the foothills. Weather beat the tanks, which became bogged and had to be abandoned. The shelling by Japanese warships, night after night, was intended apparently to screen the landing of reinforcements or stores.

Static condition ended on the night of August 30, the Japanese attack having been strongly reinforced the previous night. Using light field pieces and machine guns, they attacked repeatedly and solidly, but were met with insistent fire from automatic weapons, and again the airstrip was denied to them.

That night was the turning point of the campaign. In the morning hundreds of Japanese dead were found near the strip, and were later buried with a bulldozer.

Australian troops now assumed the offensive, and moved steadily down the track and through the jungle, harassed all the way by Japanese snipers hidden in the tops of coconut palms, or tied to trees in the jungle.

Heavy fighting occurred around the east of the KB Mission, and before dawn of September 3, Japanese warships again entered the bay to support their land forces. Nevertheless, pressure was maintained by the Australians, to whom, within the next three days, it had become evident that the Japanese had been compelled to abandon their attempt to take Milne Bay. It appeared that in the recent nights Japanese ships had taken off many stragglers.

Japanese resistance completely ceased by September 7. The failure had cost him at least 1,000 of his best troops—the marines. Most of his wounded probably were evacuated by ship.

Stragglers who had evaded the Australians were being mopped up for months after the campaign proper had ended. Some got across the range, but were killed on the north coast. Others died of starvation and sickness along the coast. Two Japanese got as far north as Wedau, where natives pelted them with stones. At dusk the Japanese hanged themselves. Their deaths represented the ignominious ending of the confident Japanese attack on Milne Bay.

## THE OWEN STANLEYS

*The Owen Stanleys campaign was the most significant action fought in New Guinea. Not only did the Japanese advance through the mountains menace Port Moresby, but it constituted the gravest threat to the security of the Australian mainland.*

*There was a psychological hurdle in this particular campaign as well as the difficult physical obstacle of the mountain trail. The lingering defeatism which had been engendered by the rapidity of*

*the Japanese advance had not been eliminated, and the offensive spirit had not been revived among the United Nations.*

Other than Milne Bay, Moresby was our only important foothold in New Guinea and our only base for effective resistance and the development of the ultimate offensive.

From a garrison area held by two brigades, Moresby was to become within a few weeks a major port, and a base for offensive operations, but in July and August even the defence was not secure, and an offensive was merely a plan. Our troops had to learn, the hard way, to beat the Japanese and to prove themselves, as they did within a few weeks, the more expert jungle fighters.

The first unit of the Australian Army to meet the Japanese in their drive across the Owen Stanleys was an untried battalion alone except for a small detachment of native troops who had marched across New Guinea in July, 1942. They met an enemy at least three times their own weight, yet for more than a month, without any support other than air strafings at the enemy's beach head and at his inland line of supply, they held up a drive which could have brought the Japanese swarming into Moresby. At no stage, despite reinforcements from Australia, was this particular force on terms of numerical equality with the Japanese.

This line of the enemy's projected advance was a track from Buna to Kokoda and the little known but difficult trail from Kokoda across the Owen Stanley Range to Moresby. It was across this trail—the Kokoda Trail as it became known subsequently to the world—that the first Australian force went to meet the Japanese threat. A small advanced party of this force arrived at Buna on July 21, while the Japanese were landing 1,500 troops at Gona, eight miles to the west.

Only a few score men could be got together to resist the Japanese when they fought their first engagement on July 23. From that engagement, as the Japanese reinforcements progressively and substantially outnumbered ours, began the long fighting withdrawal over the Owen Stanleys. This limited force, in ambushes and desperate stands, killed many more than it lost, but always it had to give way to the tremendous weight of the greater Japanese numbers.

The force lost at Kokoda the valuable aerodrome, but attacked and regained it, only to be driven out by overwhelming pressure on August 10.

The Japanese chose their time in pushing beyond Kokoda where they were building up a forward base. The original Australian force was now badly worn as the result of its constant activity, but

Australians on the Syrian border.

Sallying forth from the Australian perimeter outside Tobruk.

Australian Women's Army Service man the searchlights.

Australian 9th Division parades before Commander-in-Chief General Alexander after Battle of El Alamein.

"fresh" troops were coming in after the heart-breaking march through the Owen Stanleys, and were being organised for another attack on the Japanese garrison at Kokoda. Already the Japanese advance had been delayed for a month. We wanted one more day. We were to have attacked on August 26, but the enemy beat us to the offensive that morning.

First unit of our reinforcement brigade began its march into the hills from Port Moresby on August 16. They had to do what white men had not previously done in New Guinea—carry loads of 60 to 90 lbs. each, as they crossed the trail—yet of the whole brigade, only eight men dropped out on the six days' march to the Kokoda area.

Behind them there was no continuing supply line. Transport could not be used a few miles beyond Moresby. There were no landing strips through the mountains where planes could be put down, and indeed there were comparatively few planes available. The technique of dropping supplies from the air had yet to be perfected, and so troops depended on what they carried themselves and what could be brought up by native boys.

Had it been possible to resolve the supply problem the probability is that the Japanese could have been held south of Kokoda, but even when air dropping was developed on a substantial scale, the loss often was as much as 50 per cent. in food and ammunition.

From August 26 this new brigade was committed, company by company, in an attempt to stem and turn the drive which the Japanese had heavily reinforced within the previous fortnight, and so the withdrawal went on, relieved by many acts of individual and collective gallantry and courage. It was the now well established conviction among the troops themselves that, given reasonable supplies, they could defeat the Japanese.

Morale did not crack during that retirement, despite high casualties, and loss of men through illness and exhaustion. From commanders to cooks, every man in the brigade of the original force played his part in the continuous delaying actions, standing off the Japanese for perhaps a day or more at a time, until when the Australians could dig in their toes less than three companies of men—worn and weary—were left out of a brigade. Opposed to them in the hills, it was estimated, the Japanese had five battalions with ancillary troops.

Withdrawals by Australian troops in this war ended on September 11. Thereafter, following a brief period of rehabilitation, and refitting, Australian troops were to assume the offensive and they were determined not to surrender it until the war ended.

The Australian Army had been trained in the school of offensive

action. Retirement had been forced upon them in several theatres —North Africa, Greece, Crete, Malaya, the islands and New Guinea. The principal reasons for those retirements had been lack of numbers and shortage of essential equipment, for neither of which any authority, military or administrative, could be held responsible.

Now, however, the Australian troops had reached the stage where they and their command refused to recognize the enemy's preponderance in numbers as a reason for withdrawal. The army had always been supplied with basic arms and it found that, with courageous exploitation, these were sufficient to give them a fighting chance. Very soon their automatic fire power was to be stepped up and equality with the enemy in that respect was to make much less important the enemy's advantage in numbers.

Their Commander-in-Chief had been to New Guinea and surveyed the general set-up. He was coming back in a few days and there was to be only one rule for the Australian Army in the field— "attack." The doctrine of offensive action was becoming paramount to the Australian Army, and, whatever the cost, the enemy had to be defeated. Supplies would be got through somehow. Given the re-occupation of suitable landing grounds, reinforcements would be flown in and casualties would be flown out, and the exhausting travel over the trail would be eliminated.

But the nearest strip that could be used for this purpose was at Kokoda, so while the enemy dug in on Eoribaiwa Ridge, the Australians began their preparations to drive him into the sea, or to kill him.

Between Eoribaiwa Ridge and Port Moresby, and so to the Australian mainland, there was little to deter the Japanese. Across a couple of ridges and he could have had an easy approach to vulnerable Port Moresby and thence to the mainland. Opposing him was a very thin line of Australian troops, but they were determined troops who had learned now the jungle lessons, and they were about to prove that they had learned them more thoroughly than had their Japanese teachers.

And so Eoribaiwa Ridge became the milestone of the Pacific theatre, to mark the end of Japanese aggression and the inauguration of victory in the Pacific.

Some American land forces had been brought into New Guinea, chiefly by air, but weeks were to pass before they got to grips with the Japanese and linked up with the Australian advance on the north coast. The American Air Forces, however, were to play an important role, particularly in the later weeks while the Japanese were being pressed back down the northern side of the Owen Stanleys.

In the meantime, the Australians began to drive the Japanese back over their tracks and to exact a vengeance numerically out of all proportion to the losses which we had suffered. The danger was acute. The easy explanation was that the enemy was being beaten by those features of terrain which had denied us success in the earlier days, but there was more to it than that; we were defeating the terrain as well as the enemy. The new Australian dictum was that odds were no excuse for defeat.

The Australian Army, in effect, set out to meet again and overcome those same difficulties of terrain which had contributed to our earlier reverses. In our ultimate success we gave effect to all the lessons of jungle fighting which had been learnt in the patrols of the previous weeks. There was no book of knowledge from any previous campaign to teach the Australians how. They had only their own experience and advice passed to them by their wounded and sick comrades of the trail, knowledge which they in turn passed readily to their American colleagues when they joined up many weeks later for the kill.

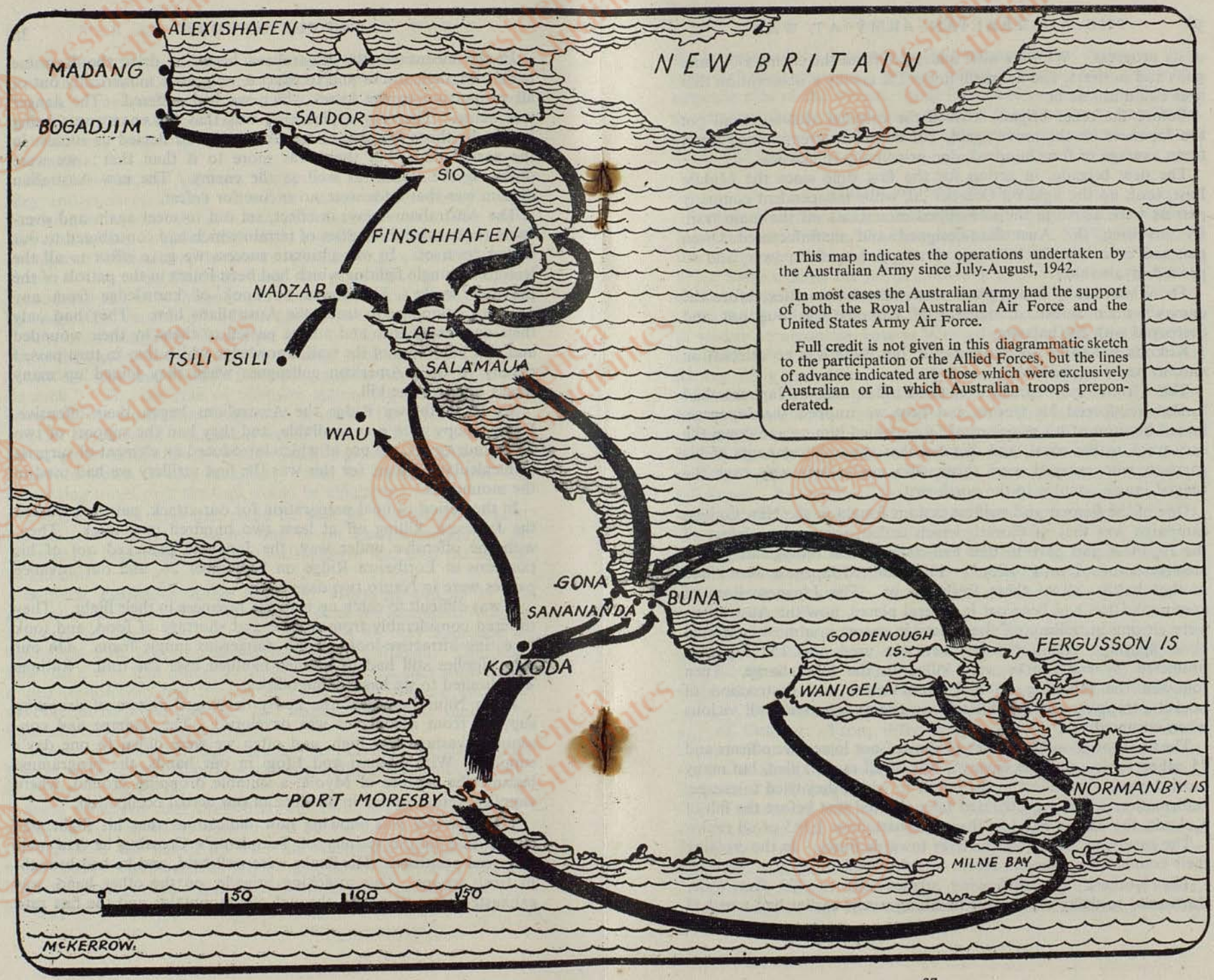
So at Eoribaiwa Ridge the Australians began their offensive. Fresh troops were now available, and they had the support of two 25-pounder guns, the use of which introduced an element of surprise of incalculable value, for this was the first artillery we had used in the mountains.

In the period of final preparation for our attack, patrols harassed the Japanese, killing off at least two hundred in a week. Then, with the offensive under way, the Japanese panicked out of his positions at Eoribaiwa Ridge on September 26, and our advance parties were in Nauro two days later.

It was difficult to catch up with the Japanese in their flight. They suffered considerably from disease and shortage of food, and took to eating attractive-looking, but dangerous jungle fruits. On our side supplies still had to be man-handled over the trail. Rations were limited to six basic commodities.

From Nauro onwards the newly developed system of dropping supplies from aeroplanes was developed. The damage and consequent wastage was high, and often we were down to one day's supplies. With Menari and Efogi in our hands, the programme became the capture of Myola, a suitable dropping ground, where supplies were dropped in advance of our actual occupation.

The Japanese was showing now indications that his flight was ended, and in the vicinity of Templeton's Crossing he had well prepared positions. His flanks were well held, and he had brought in fresh troops. Our attacking brigade, on the other hand, was exhausted after its march through the mountains and the fast rate




This map indicates the operations undertaken by the Australian Army since July-August, 1942.

In most cases the Australian Army had the support of both the Royal Australian Air Force and the United States Army Air Force.

Full credit is not given in this diagrammatic sketch to the participation of the Allied Forces, but the lines of advance indicated are those which were exclusively Australian or in which Australian troops preponderated.

of its progress. We were now under fire from the enemy's 70-mm. guns and mortars, and so much under the enemy's observation that fires could not be lit.

Before the relief brigade arrived the original attackers had got the Japanese on the move again, but battalion strength was down to an average of four hundred, due principally to sickness.

The new brigade, in action for the first time since the Middle East, took up the fight on October 20, while independent company patrols were active in the unmapped mountains off the main trail. By this time, the Australian-designed and manufactured Owen gun had been brought into use. It stepped up fire power, and so proved invaluable.

There was heavy fighting and some severe casualties before the enemy's main screen in defence of Kokoda was dug out and destroyed with the bayonet.

Kokoda fell to us on November 2, but there was no celebration and no pause in the attack.

The "front" now spread over three miles, and the Japanese had further reinforced his troops, but here we trapped the Japanese, forced him out of his positions at Oivi, denied him escape down the easy track to the coast, and dictated that the only remnants of his garrison who escaped were those who made their way over the rugged jungle country to the north-east.

One of the fiercest and swiftest actions fought in the New Guinea campaign was that of Gorari, which ended in complete defeat of the Japanese and gave to that evil-smelling and unhygienic jungle area the name "Death Valley." Five hundred Japanese were killed in that battle—all of them fresh troops. The Japanese lines of communication had been cut in several places, now the Australians were closing in, killing off the enemy in scores in almost continual close fighting. Again the bayonet was used and 150 Japanese protected by earthworks were killed in the first charge. Then followed the mopping up and encirclement and destruction of pockets, trapping and annihilating an enemy who was still vicious when cornered.

The final count on November 13 showed our losses five officers and 75 other ranks, and the enemy's 580 of all ranks killed, but many more Japanese were lost in the jungle to which they tried to escape. Information which we obtained later showed that before the fall of Kokoda the enemy had lost from two battalions 1,185 of all ranks.

The survivors fled across the river towards Buna. In the crossing their commander, General Horii, was drowned.

The Kumusi, a swift-flowing stream 200 to 400 feet wide, threatened to delay us, for our bombing weeks earlier had wrecked

the bridge, and the Japanese in their retirement had destroyed their own makeshift crossing. With a patrol of twenty men across the opposite side of the stream, flying foxes and two wire rope bridges carried the infantry across, and the chase began again, to hem in the Japanese and eventually to destroy him in his bridgeheads of Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

## Battle of the Beaches

In the meantime the command had been preparing to clear the Japanese out of Buna, Gona and Sanananda. While the Australian troops were coming down through the Owen Stanleys the first direct move against the north coast was undertaken by a battalion of Australian troops who had been stationed at Milne Bay.

On October 5 this battalion began to put into effect its programme of seizing an aeroplane base at Wanegila, in the Tufi Peninsula, on the north coast of the island. From this point a force was to make its way along the north coast to direct an attack on the beach heads.

It took two days to get this battalion and all its gear from Milne Bay to Wanegila, the first occasion on which a complete battalion of Australian troops was transported by air. Sixty plane loads landed the first day, and each was unloaded in an average of seven minutes. The engines did not stop on the rough strip cut through tall kunai. By October 7 the defences of the strip and on the beach were complete, and Australian infantry were improving the airfield. They had a new strip ready for use by October 13.

American troops were then shifted into the area by air, the movement continuing until October 17. During its progress Australian commandos and patrols of American troops were throwing out feelers towards Buna.

The original programme of moving across country had to be abandoned because rains and floods made the country impassable. Instead, small boats were used and a small force transported in these seized Pongani. The American force established its headquarters at Mendaropu, a few miles beyond Pongani, towards the end of October. From there American and Australian patrols probed deep into the Japanese area. Presently this force moved westward along the coast, establishing headquarters at Oro Bay, Eroro and at Embogu.

This movement had been carried out without the knowledge of the Japanese, but on November 16, his observers from Cape Endaidiere saw movements of little ships into Hariko and he retaliated with air attack.

The Japanese had, however, gone to ground in his beach heads, and although he was later to defend his pill boxes with the ferocity

of desperation, he did not make an attack by land against the troops at Hariko.

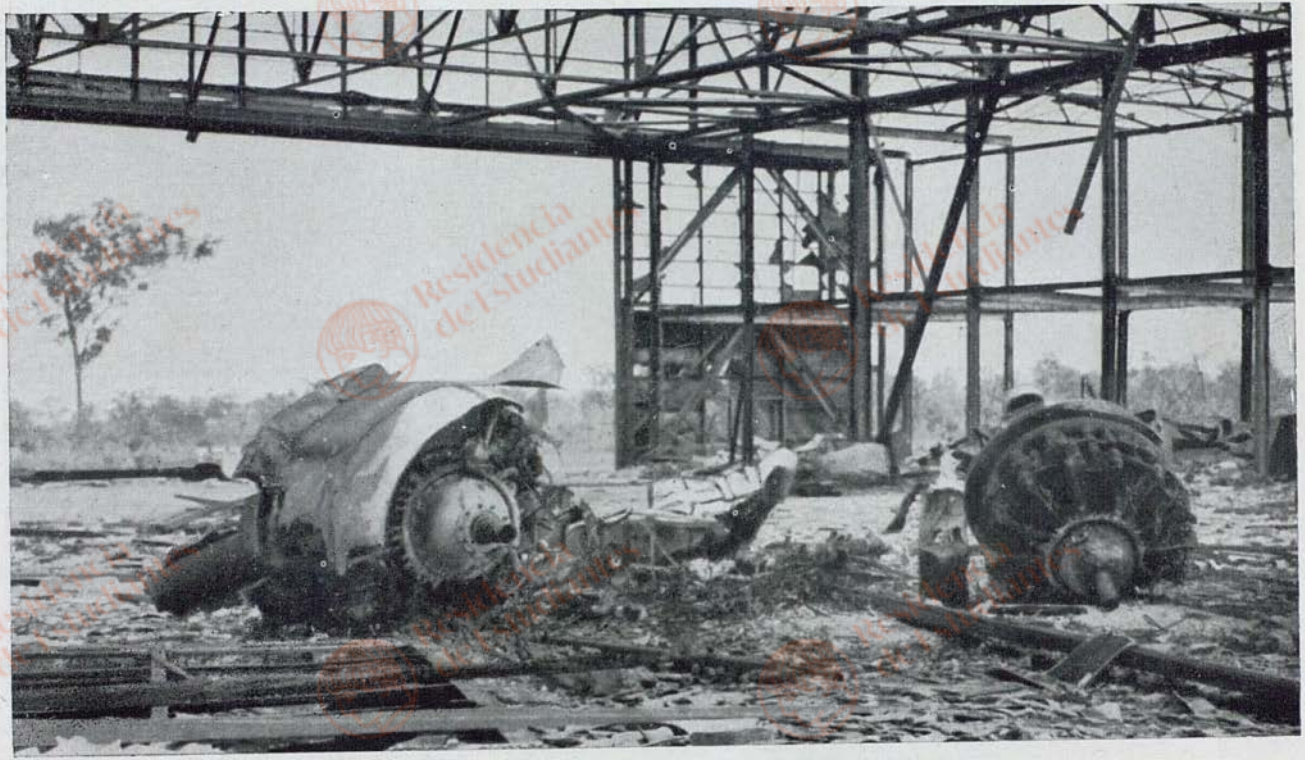
First contact between the American troops and the Australians who had come through the Owen Stanleys was made at Popondetta, which was soon to become an important terminus for air transport. Australian Headquarters were established at Soputa. One Australian force was directed against Gona, while the other followed the winding trail which led to Sanananda.

In this general area of Gona-Buna-Sanananda, the Japanese had built a maze of earth works and pill boxes, in the construction of which he had used coconut palms. Trunks up to a foot in diameter formed cover for strong posts, which were able to stand hits from even 25-pounders, and in these posts cunningly placed to give strategic lines of fire, the Japanese sat for weeks. He crouched in his post for 24 hours a day—ate, drank and slept in a filthy pit only a few feet square. He obeyed his orders to "Stay there," but rarely showed initiative to adjust himself to changed conditions. He rarely attempted to gain ground. His orders were based on the realisation that his main strength lay in maintaining perimeter defences. Reliefs, ammunition and stores were brought to him along a maze of communicating trenches about four feet deep. He was living underground and fighting from almost impenetrable strong posts.

The first Australian success was registered in the attack against Gona. One battalion occupied the village, but these troops were now dependent upon aerial supply and, as adverse weather had closed down the mountains, no transports were able to cross for several days. Without food and seriously short of ammunition the battalion retired, to retake the town later.

The main assault on the beach heads began on November 19. Australian troops, many of whom had fought over the Owen Stanleys, and others who had been flown into the area, were allotted the task of taking Gona, and then pushing on to Sanananda. The Americans were to attack Buna. The task was to be facilitated by the aerial delivery of jeeps and 25-pounders, although the work of the artillery was most difficult, as in places only 50 to 100 yards separated the forward troops of both forces.

The Japanese had no intention of abandoning their strongholds, and at night were reinforcing their garrison by barges staged down the coast. These barges were engaged by the newly arrived artillery, sometimes 500 rounds being fired intermittently in a night. At the same time increase in Allied air strength had been marked, and aerial attacks on the Japanese positions reached proportions unprecedented in the campaign.



Hangar at Darwin destroyed in Japanese bombing raids.

Australian Commandos on patrol in Portuguese Timor.

" Diggers " knock out Japanese tanks on road to Singapore.

Wet going in New Guinea.

Malaria and tropical illnesses were still taking a heavy toll of Australian troops, and two brigades became so seriously depleted in effectives that neither could muster a complete battalion.

Fresh Australian troops assured the fall of Gona on December 1. Then followed the battle for Gona Mission, for its size the most severe of the whole campaign. Its capture was completed with hand to hand fighting on December 9. Eight hundred Japanese bodies were counted.

Simultaneously with the Australian attack on Gona, the Americans had launched attacks on Buna, supported by Australian bren carriers. They defied a maze of pill boxes in the coconut plantations, which closed the coastal strip leading on to Buna. Other Americans had pushed up the Buna track and dug in within a thousand yards of Buna village.

In the middle of December an Australian brigade, brought by sea from Milne Bay and supported by a squadron of light tanks, pushed through the Americans and launched a successful attack on the coconuts and Cape Endaidiere.

Buna fell on December 28, and only Sanananda remained to be cleared, but this proved the most difficult of all. The Japanese had been able to reinforce and maintain supplies by barge, despite sustained air and sea attacks. He had been contained there by only a handful of Australians left astride the track just south of the outer Japanese positions. More troops could not be spared because of the demands for the attacks on Gona and Buna.

The area from which the enemy had to be cleared at Sanananda was roughly in the form of an elongated triangle with Cape Killerton to the west and Sanananda Point to the east forming a two-mile base. The Japanese depended largely on swamp country to protect him on the western side, concentrating his defence on the dry ground along the track on the eastern side.

The Australian troops who had been victorious at Cape Endaidiere and Buna were brought over to Sanananda, and with American troops under command took up positions together at the track junction, or the apex of the triangle. The American force from Buna was moved west along the coast. The Australian attack from the apex was launched on January 12. They cleared the track to the south and pushed straight ahead towards the sea. Nearing the coast, they turned east into the Japanese, feathering out to resemble something like a ten-pronged attack, with the north prong pushing rapidly along the coast to Sanananda Point. Americans astride the Sanananda track in the south had been keeping the enemy busy, and he was taken completely by surprise when the Australians appeared, attacking through the swamps and jungle which the enemy had thought impassable.

By January 18 Australians on the coast had pushed east past Sanananda Point to contact the Americans beyond. Another Australian force pushed in from the sea, straight down the track and linked with the Americans in the south. Others closed in from the west and trapped the enemy trying to escape.

By January 23 all organised resistance had ceased. Most of the Japanese had perished in the trap, though some small parties managed to escape across the swamps to the west.

Outnumbered by at least 50 per cent., the Australians and, in later months, Americans, had wiped out the Japanese force of at least 16,000.

The clearing of the beach heads on the north coast made possible the subsequent campaign against Lae and Salamaua, the Markham and Ramu Valleys and the Huon Peninsula, as well as the American operations against New Britain and the much later by-passing movement which took them into Dutch New Guinea.

## BATTLE FOR WAU

*The major triumph behind the Australians, they were given a little relief from the Japanese threat and almost immediately after the elimination of the Japanese beach head at Gona, Buna and Sanananda, the Army had to swing its attention to Wau.*

Left almost untouched by the Japanese other than by air raids since their first landing in New Guinea territory, Wau, a centre of the commercial wealth of the country, was attacked in January-February, 1943, by a Japanese force. Apparently the Japanese idea was that the landing strip at Wau would be a suitable jumping off place for aerial attacks against Port Moresby. Their idea may also have been to provide some form of insurance to the integrity of Salamaua and Lae.

Whatever the reason, on January 27 the Japanese launched an attack against Wau. This was frustrated after hard fighting, and from Wau began a campaign which was to last seven months, and which was to prepare the way for the ultimate elimination of the Japanese from Salamaua, Lae, Huon Peninsula and the Markham and Ramu Valleys.

In the early days of the Japanese landing in New Guinea the defence of this portion of this country was left, of necessity, almost entirely to the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, composed chiefly of men who knew the country and had worked there in various civilian capacities, from that of Government official to gold miner.

They had not sufficient strength to even attempt to drive the

Japanese from the territory into which he penetrated, but they harassed the enemy, collected valuable information, and later, when the new independent companies got into the territory, they became more than a mere nuisance to the Japanese.

In the meantime, a scorched earth plan had been carried out, and non-essential civilians had been evacuated from the area. The details of the Japanese attack against Wau are unimportant only in comparison with the major victories which had been achieved in the previous few months by Australian troops in Papua, but the loss of Wau would have considerably offset the results achieved by the Milne Bay and Owen Stanley successes.

Before the Japanese launched their attack Australian independent companies and the N.G.V.R. had inflicted heavy casualties, and to some extent had disconcerted the Japanese plan of conquest. Their job was not to drive the enemy out, but to kill and run, and they did that job with outstanding success.

Then in January, 1943, the enemy attempted determinedly to take Wau. He was opposed, in the first instance, by only a small force, but while his actual attack was in progress, reinforcements were flown into Wau aerodrome and disembarked from the aeroplanes under fire.

In one day 57 landings were made on the strip. By February 4, the Japanese had been thrashed and were dispersing. From then onwards the Australians conducted a seven months' campaign of bitter fighting through the mountains and ridges between Wau and Salamaua.

All this fighting was a major feature of the planned campaign which the command had prepared for the operations to be undertaken in September, 1943, and which were ultimately to expel the Japanese from his major New Guinea bases.

Throughout this period of seven months the Japanese resisted strongly every attempted Australian advance. They fell completely into the trap prepared by the command, and from Lae, through Salamaua, fed into this mountainous hinterland, thousands of men to be killed off by the persistent offensive action of the Australian troops, supplemented in the later stages by an American operation along the northern coast.

From Wau Valley the Japanese withdrew into stronger outer defences around Salamaua. In the Mubo Valley he was strongly dug in on high ground. His defences ran through such places, which became well known to the world, as Garrison Hill, Observation Hill, Green Hill and The Pimple.

The enemy established his positions to command the trails which, though often little more than native pads, are the life blood of the

jungle and off which movement is well nigh impossible, but he was prised from one such position after another, and in his fanatical fighting lost an incalculable number of men.

Finally, out of this campaign came the situation that a comparatively small force of Australians was poised waiting to seize Salamaua, when in September, 1943, the most spectacular operation of the S.W.P.A. was undertaken, and two veteran divisions from the Middle East inaugurated the campaign nominally directed against Lae, but aimed at the clearance of the enemy from the Markham and Ramu Valleys and the Huon Peninsula.

## COMBINED OPERATION

*On September 4, 1943, Australian Army launched its major offensive operation in New Guinea. On that day, troops of the 9th Division landed on the shores of Huon Gulf in an amphibious operation, made possible by the co-operation of the American Navy and under the cover provided by the American Air Force, to be followed immediately by an aerial operation in the Markham Valley by the 7th Division.*

The campaign against Lae was a model of the co-ordination of all available service resources. Navy, Army and Air co-operated on the one hand in the amphibious movement; the Army and Air co-operated in the complementary action, in which paratroops were used, and in which, for the first time, Australian artillerymen were parachuted into action. Supplementing the aerial movement, pioneers and engineers had been on the move by river and overland for some days, to ensure that all the necessary resources were on hand for the development of landing strips.

The role of the 9th Division was, following the landing on the shores of Huon Gulf, to drive in two directions, the major movement being along the coast toward Lae, and the subsidiary movement in the easterly direction towards Hopoi Mission and thence on to Finschhafen. The 7th Division, after the way had been prepared by American paratroops and Australian paratroop artillery, engineers and pioneers, was to come in by air to Nadzab and move rapidly down the rough road to Lae.

In the meantime, at the appropriate movement, other Australian troops waiting in the vicinity, were to seize Salamaua and complete the destruction of the Japanese force in that area.

From Lae, 9th Division was to turn to Finschhafen and the 7th Division was to move back up the Markham Valley into the Ramu and feel its way toward Bogadjim.

Every movement was completed in accordance with programme. Despite resistance, the capture of Lae was effected rapidly, the Japanese having fallen into the trap that was laid for him and dribbled the greater part of his strength into Salamaua, and thence into the slaughter yards of the mountains beyond.

Lae was captured on the morning of September 16, the credit going to the 7th Division. It was followed almost immediately by advance units of 9th Division. Then it was found that the Japanese who had not been drawn into the killing pen of Salamaua (which had been captured by Australian troops on September 11) had attempted to escape through mountains to the north. They were to be hunted down by converging forces from both 7th and 9th Divisions.

The 7th Division immediately turned back up the Markham Valley and the 9th prepared to move on to Finschhafen, the latter movement involving another amphibious landing, which was effected north of Finschhafen on the night of September 22-23.

In contra-distinction with the surprise landing on the Huon Gulf, the naval bombardment which preceded the Finschhafen landing, while it involved casualties to the enemy, gave him some warning of the landing attempt. When the troops went ashore they found the defences fully manned, and, by concentrated fire, an attempt was made to deny us the beach head.

Shortly after morning the beach and the immediate fringe of undergrowth had been cleared of the enemy and Australians were pushing towards their objective. There was heavy fighting before Finschhafen was captured on October 2, but this base, which was to be a possible jumping-off place for the Americans in their assault on New Britain, could not be called secure until the Japanese, who were reinforced steadily from their strongholds along the north coast of New Guinea, had been cleared out of the high ground around Finschhafen.

Finschhafen, held slenderly, was always open to attack, but we were always conscious of this, and plans were made accordingly. As expected, the Japanese assault did ultimately come. It was launched against the beach on which the original landing had been made. This battle, which history will call "The Battle for Scarlet Beach," raged for five days before the Jap was beaten off and forced to return to his foxholes in the hill country.

He remained in the hill country, dominating any move which we might attempt to make northward, until he was finally driven from Satelberg and Wareo in November, 1943.

British Matilda tanks were used in these operations—the first time that heavy or medium tanks had been used in New Guinea.

With the fall of Satelberg, which meant more security for the Finschhafen base, the drive northward along the Huon Peninsula began, towards Sio.

In the meantime American troops, operating from Finschhafen, by-passed the coast along which the Australians were moving, landed at Saidor and established a perimeter, where they awaited the arrival of the Australian forces coming up the coast. Forward Australian troops were in Sio Mission by January 14, 1944.

From Sio, the drive up the coast was continued by the Australians, and contact with the Americans at Saidor was made early on February 10.

## Markham and Ramu Valleys

The success of the units under the 7th Division command in the Markham and Ramu Valleys centred on three major operations subsequent to the fall of Lae. The first was the capture of Kaiapit, followed by the occupation of Dumpu, and finally the battle for Shaggy Ridge. The last-named eliminated completely the Japanese domination of the valley and opened the way for Australian troops to move through to Bogadjim, and thence up the coast to Madang and Alexishafen.

Kaiapit was important because it possessed a large air strip. It was captured in an air-borne operation, the second incursion of its kind into enemy territory.

Thence the drive was continued up the Markham and Ramu Valleys to Dumpu, which gave us an advanced landing ground. This was of the greatest importance because supplies for the entire formation operating in these valleys had to be maintained by air from Moresby and other bases.

Beyond Dumpu was the principal obstacle of the Ramu Valley—the Finisterre Ranges. Here the enemy's defence gave him observation down the entire Valley. It was located in the peak of what became known as Shaggy Ridge, at a height of 5,600 feet above sea level. The Japanese, after aerial and artillery bombardment, had to be dug out of fox holes in the very peak of this ridge, but its subjugation was completed before the end of January.

With the capture of Shaggy Ridge, the so-called motor road to Bogadjim was open. The original role of the Australian troops did not contemplate that they would carry through to Bogadjim, but that they would maintain a series of patrols to clear the surrounding country. Subsequently, however, the Australian role was enlarged and the troops took possession of Bogadjim, and with it large quantities of equipment.

The Australians approached this portion of the New Guinea coast from two directions. Some of them came in from the Ramu Valley. Others were part of the force which had moved up the coast from Sio and past Saidor.

From Bogadjim they continued to follow the retreating Japanese and quickly took possession of Madang, which had been occupied by an estimated 18,000 Japanese. Madang was at one time capital of German New Guinea in the pre-1914 administration, and it had been a major Japanese base since December, 1942.

From Madang, which fell to us on April 24, the Australians continued to take formal possession of Alexishafen. In the area of Madang-Alexishafen, there was only isolated contact with the Japanese. No serious attempt had been made by them to protect the three operational air strips which they had developed in the general area.

# SPECIAL FORCES

*Apart from the major campaigns in which Australian troops have participated, special forces from the Australian Army, some substantial, others small, have been engaged in active operations in a number of countries.*

In many of these cases, the details of which even now cannot be disclosed, the troops comprised " Independent Companies," a formation new to the Australian Army. Patterned on the British commandos, these troops were secretly trained in Australia for all types of guerrilla warfare. Their training was based on the knowledge that they were to be absolutely self-contained units, sometimes living catch-as-catch-can in the jungle.

These troops were employed on a considerable scale in New Guinea and in Pacific Islands. In some cases their original role was that of garrison troops. Other Australian troops served in Ceylon. The Pacific Island postings included the Solomons, Admiralty groups and New Caledonia. Small parties served in China and Ethiopia.

Soon after the Australian 8th Division arrived in Malaya, a number of men was specially selected to go on an assignment to China. It is too early yet to say why they went and in what operations they were engaged. Every soldier selected was earmarked for a specific job. They travelled along the Burma Road and into the heart of China. They saw service on the Chinese front against the Japanese before they left and returned to Australia by way of India.

## Ethiopia

It was in Ethiopia that five Australians—a lieutenant and four sergeants—joined a force which routed the Italians, captured hundreds of prisoners and booty and enjoyed a little war of their own making while other Australian troops were in North Africa.

The Ethiopian venture was the officer's own idea and permission was eventually given him to proceed with his four sergeants to Gojjam to join in the programme of sabotage, destruction of Italian lines of communication, and fomenting rebellion of the local populace against Italian domination. After surmounting the language difficulty by learning Sudan Arabic—a simplified dialect of 800 words—and completing their training in Khartoum, these five Australians proceeded to Gojjam in command of four companies of loyal Abyssinians who had fled their country on its conquest by the Italians in 1935.

The party numbered 200, and, while during the campaign that number was often increased by the enlistment for specific tasks of patriotic natives, that total remained the nucleus of the force.

On December 30, 1940, the force crossed the Italian line of defence into Gojjam at a point about 9 miles from Dangala where there was an Italian garrison of 6,000. Gojjam was chosen for the opening of operations because of its peculiar relationship to the rest of the Ethiopian Empire. It had never been more than nominally a part of Haile Selassies' Empire, for, as a dissident kingdom on the fringe of Ethiopia, it had succumbed early to the Italian invasion of 1935 and had joined in the campaign against Haile Selassie.

After six months of Italian rule, however, Gojjam revolted in 1936, and the province was thrown into a state of war—a circumstance that existed when the Australians leading the Abyssinians opened up their programme of strife.

Early operations were along the road between Dangala and Burye. Many convoys were mined and the road was finally denied to the enemy for transport of ammunition and supplies to the ring of forts that protected the province.

Then, on February 2, 1941, the force set about wrecking the forts. Engiabara with a garrison of 1,500, was the first to fall. Firing three-inch mortars—their heaviest weapons—the Australians hoodwinked the Italians into thinking they were being attacked from the air, and no ground fire came in reply to their assault. Burye, 38 miles from Engiabara, with a garrison of 8,000, was next marked for destruction. There the Italians in the three forts surrounding the town panicked when they saw the grass-hutted town on fire, and, thinking the town was being closely engaged, they shelled "the enemy." It was a matter of self destruction on the Italians' part,

ably assisted by the Australians and the loyal Abyssinians with mortars, machine-guns and grenades.

In attempting to flee to Burye, the Engiabara garrison was engaged about 20 kilos from Burye, and the enemy was forced to abandon all stores. The same thing happened to the Burye garrison when it attempted to run to Addis Ababa. A destroyed bridge and a mined road caused their downfall, and the raiders collected much valuable motor transport.

Thus, Engiabara and Burye were effectively destroyed.

The Australians had a rest until March 17, when they opened up again, this time—and the only time for the period they were in the country—with another force. Debramarcos, another fort, was selected as the target for assault, and the Australian-led force combined with the Sudan Defence Force for the operation. Bahrdar Fort, on the edge of Lake Tana, the source of the River Nile, was next on the list, but there was no resistance.

Early in June, these modern buccaneers went into Goudar district, almost the sole surviving area of Italian operations. There there was little to do except wait for the Italians to come out and surrender.

Shortly afterwards the Australians were recalled to Egypt and went back to their gunnery.

Because of its ideal climate and the better healing qualities of the atmosphere, Gura, in Eritrea, was selected as the site for one of the Australian General Hospitals. And so Eritrea became another spot in the world trodden by Australians during this war.

# MAINLAND DEFENCE

*When Japan entered the war, defence of the Australian mainland against invasion was in the first instance the responsibility principally of C.M.F. troops, compulsorily called up for service, supplemented by the Volunteer Defence Corps, whose role generally was the watching of isolated sections of the coast, and static duty in the protection of vital industrial localities.*

It was completely beyond the capacity of a country with a population of only seven millions, effectively to defend even its most vulnerable areas, particularly as it had been committed to the maintenance of a substantial contribution to the Empire air programme and to the maintenance of its divisions abroad, while the small Australian Navy was largely on service in European waters.

The problem of the twelve thousand miles of coastline was further aggravated by the concentration of practically the entire population

along the east, south and south-west coasts. Those areas where the Japanese was most likely to strike if he attempted to gain a footing were sparsely settled, and distances were measured not in miles, but in hundreds of miles.

It was because of this that Australian strategy contemplated meeting the Japanese wherever he would make the fight outside the Australian mainland.

Ample evidence has been accumulated that the invasion of Australia was part of the Japanese programme, and, although the army stopped the Japanese beyond the mainland, Australia itself was subject to attack.

Apart from the nuisance shelling of Sydney and Newcastle and the ill-fated excursion of midget submarines in Sydney Harbour in May, 1942, ninety-six air raids were made by the enemy against the Australian mainland. This tally probably ranks Australia second only to Britain and Malta in the number of enemy aerial attacks made against countries not within areas of actual land operations.

Within twelve months of Japanese intervention in the war, enlistments in all of the armed services had more than doubled, and represented two-thirds of the male population between the ages of 18 and 40 years.

The first air raid on Australian territory was made against Darwin on February 19, 1942, when A.I.F. troops, recalled from the Middle East for service in Burma and Malaya and diverted to Australia because of fast Japanese progress, were still on the water. Although the Japanese concentrated on Darwin, he switched his attacks successively to the north-west and east coasts.

So seriously was the Japanese threat then regarded that one A.I.F. formation was, immediately after its arrival in Australia, posted to the Northern Territory.

Meantime armoured formations, which had been raised for service in the Middle East, were retained in Australia. In the initial stages they were equipped with General Stuart and General Grant tanks. Some have since been replaced by British Matilda tanks, units of which have already been employed in New Guinea.

Peace-time Australia had not built its roads to service an army garrisoning its outposts against threat of invasion, and the railway networks did not reach out to the vulnerable areas. So roads had to be built.

Some were army jobs ; others were made by the road-building authorities of the several States ; others by the "civilian army"—the Civil Construction Corps, to which men unfit or too old for active service were drafted compulsorily. Eventually behind the army was a network of roads, chief of which were a highway linking


This map emphasises the problem of local defence which had to be faced by the Australian Army when the Japanese advance threatened to overwhelm the Commonwealth.

The 12,000 miles of Australian coastline which had to be defended is shown in relation to the coastline of Europe.

West Australia with the industrialised eastern States, another between Darwin and the south, and a third into the Northern Territory from eastern Queensland.

This road building and general development programme was to be repeated later—by the army—in New Guinea, where what had been mere anchorages for island luggers were converted into ports capable of handling deep water shipping, and where native trails became modern highways.

Return of the A.I.F., which brought back the equipment with which it had been supplied in the Middle East on a comparatively lavish scale, put the mainland defences on an effective basis. Australian industry had been struggling hard to change over to war production, and had produced a tremendous range of equipment, from rifles to 25-pounders and anti-aircraft guns, but the demands for the protection of a country almost as large as the whole of Europe could not be met in a few months.

And the army had to start from scratch, because the small force which existed at the outbreak of war could not, by any standards, be regarded as trained for battle.

# AUSTRALIA'S HOME GUARD

*An integral part of the Australian programme of home defence against the threat of Japanese invasion was the Volunteer Defence Corps—the Australian equivalent of Great Britain's Home Guard.*

The role of this Corps was basically the same as that of Britain's Home Guard. In its early stages it was composed almost entirely of men who had served in the war of 1914-1918, but who were, for reasons of occupation or physical condition, unable again to take their place with the Australian troops in the overseas theatres of war.

Later, as more important duties were allotted to the Corps, it was decided substantially to increase their numbers. The ranks included then younger men who, because of their essential occupations, were not allowed to join any of the armed forces.

The Corps was inaugurated on July 15, 1940. It reached its maximum strength in June, 1942, when enlistments aggregated 98,000. To-day, with the threat of invasion receding rapidly, the Corps is able to surrender many of its former duties, but remains an effective and trained reserve, capable of use in an emergency.

In its early days the Corps shared with the other Australian forces the grave disabilities imposed by shortage of equipment. There

were neither uniforms nor rifles for all, and, like their British counterparts, much of their early training was done with dummy weapons. Improvisation was, of necessity, the rule. Single shot ·310 rifles were used as a substitute for the service ·303 ; all the ingenuity of skilled soldiers was brought to bear in the development of substitute grenades from lengths of water pipe ; German machine-guns, trophies of the 1914-18 war, were recovered, rebuilt and put into working order.

Eventually, however, the Corps was uniformed, new ·303 rifles were issued, and its components developed a high fire-power potential by the use of Australian-made sub-machine-guns, supplemented soon afterwards by Australian produced light machine-guns, 3-inch mortars, 2-pounder tank attack guns, carriers and grenades.

In May, 1941, the Corps was constituted as part of the Australian Military Forces, and it was assigned the role of providing static defence, primarily of areas in proximity to the places of abode or employment of its members.

Nominations for enlistment came from near and far—from the extremities of Cape York to Hobart, from Sydney across the hinterland to Broome on the lonely North-West coast. Australia had no difficulty in finding her reserves.

The members, a few on full time, others on part time duty, were employed as plane spotters, coast watchers, protectors of vital industries.

Later, the role was extended and the V.D.C. took over from the Army the responsibility for many of the anti-aircraft defences of vital industries, releasing younger men for service in the north and in New Guinea. Others were used on coastal artillery and searchlight duties.

In many parts units of the Corps provided themselves with horses, and their mounted patrols were a feature of the plan of defence for some of the more isolated stretches of the Australian coastline.

When the Corps was first set up its establishment was 50,000, but enlistments always exceed the establishment, and in February, 1942, the latter was increased by War Cabinet to 80,000 and again in December, 1942, to 100,000. With the age limits fixed at between 18 and 60 years, and with compulsory retirement at 65, the average age of members of the Corps is approximately 36 years.

# ARMY WOMEN'S SERVICES

*There has been a tremendous expansion in the activities of women in the Army since the outbreak of war in* 1939. *The only Army Women's Service in existence then was the Australian Army Nursing Service with a small number of nursing sisters on its reserve. In mid-*1941 *the Australian Women's Army Service was formed to provide womanpower for the A.M.F. so that fit men might be released for service in forward areas, and just over a year later the Australian Army Medical Women's Service came into being as the Army formation of the erstwhile V.A.D.'s.*

To-day there are nearly 30,000 in these three Army Women's Services.

## AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

The A.A.N.S. was, naturally, the first of the three Army Women's Services in the field. Its members have served in every battle area where the Australian Army has fought—in the sands of the Western Desert, in Greece, in Eritrea, in the mud of New Guinea and in the jungle of Malaya. They have served, too, in hospital ships and transports, and have also given trojan and unpublicised service in base hospitals and camp hospitals in Australia.

The Service was mobilised on September 4, 1939, and from then until January, 1940, when the first contingent of nurses embarked for overseas, was a period of mobilisation, organisation and general preparation.

During those few months the uniform of the Service, which first came into being in July, 1902, was modernised from the ankle-lengthened, high-necked and high-hatted style of the 1914–1918 war to the short-skirted, shirt-necked and low-crown hat of 1939.

The first overseas contingent sailed with the 2/1 A.G.H., which accompanied the 6th Division to Palestine. The hospital was established on Gaza Ridge, a spot full of memories of World War One for the A.A.N.S.

The next overseas contingent also went to Gaza Ridge, where the Sisters were detached to British Hospitals until the 2/2 was moved to El Kantara to establish the hospital in the desert on the edge of the Suez Canal, which received the wounded from the first Libyan Campaign, the famous " Bardia Boys."

Members of the next draft of Sisters to sail are still known as

"The Battle for Britain Girls," having arrived in England in time to serve during the 1940 blitz. Later these and another batch of Sisters who went to England served in the Middle East.

By the end of 1940 members of the A.A.N.S. attached to six A.G.H's and three Casualty Clearing Stations were serving in the Middle East.

In 1941 there were A.A.N.S. units working in England, Australia, Palestine, Libya, Egypt, Greece, Eritrea, Syria, Malaya and Ceylon. During this year the sisters worked under many and varied conditions, and in all kinds of hospitals, tents, underground dug-outs, huts, evacuated civil hospitals, and even palaces, such as the Kaiserine on the Mount of Olives.

The year 1941 saw the evacuation of the Sisters of two A.G.H's. and one C.C.S. from Greece, and of an A.G.H. and a C.C.S. from Tobruk, during both of which arduous operations the sisters gave magnificent service and were with difficulty induced to evacuate. For her leadership during the evacuation from Greece one of the matrons received the Royal Red Cross, the first to be awarded to an Australian in this war.

All through their service in the Middle East the Sisters worked at high pressure, often during air raids, caring for the acutely sick and seriously wounded from Libya, Greece, Crete and Syria. During the Syrian campaign they had their first experience of nursing malarial patients in large numbers, and during this campaign, too, they were attached in small teams to Field Ambulances in snow-bound Syria when these units were being used as small hospitals and holding their own sick and wounded.

One unit of nurses attached to a C.C.S. actually moved up with medical units in the wake of General Montgomery's forces after the victory over Rommel at El Alamein.

During their service in the Middle East five Royal Red Crosses were awarded to members of the A.A.N.S., and one Associate Royal Red Cross was awarded.

The collapse of Singapore in 1942 brought the greatest blow the A.A.N.S. has suffered in this war. Sixty-five Sisters were posted as missing after the fall, of whom 32 are officially listed as prisoners of war, and are held by the Japanese in Sumatra, while 33 are still unaccounted for. Among those posted missing was the senior matron, who has been awarded the R.R.C.

For their magnificent courage during their escape from Singapore, when the ship they were on was dive-bombed, and they protected wounded with their own bodies, two members of the A.A.N.S. were decorated, one receiving the George Medal and the other the M.B.E.

In 1942 the majority of the A.A.N.S. returned to sites in Australia,

in many cases to conditions more primitive and difficult than they had experienced abroad. One hospital was blown to pieces by a cyclone, and then the wreckage was saturated and drowned by torrential rains.

Central Australia and the Northern Territory had become operational areas, and the Sisters serving in them, from Alice Springs to Darwin, had to undertake the care of the civilian and native population as well as of military personnel, even to the extent of providing an obstetrical service.

The end of 1942 saw the first draft of Sisters in New Guinea, where conditions were more grim than ever, and 75 Sisters were soon coping with over 2,000 patients. They were hampered by mud, malaria, and insufficient and inadequate equipment.

In 1943 several hundreds of Sisters were working in New Guinea, serving in hospitals in Moresby, and over the range at Buna, Lae and Finschhafen. Already one Royal Red Cross has been awarded to a member of the A.A.N.S. for service in New Guinea.

Working dress became a problem in areas infested with malaria and scrub typhus, and the uniform modernised in 1939 was still further modernised in 1943 to meet the needs of tropical service. So the nurses' tropical suit was devised, consisting of safari jacket, slacks, boots, gaiters and broad-brimmed hat, which now, in certain areas, replaces the more picturesque grey, scarlet and white indoor dress.

In addition to their service in base, general and camp hospitals, casualty clearing stations, hospital ships and transports, members of the A.A.N.S. have served—and are serving—in training battalions, where they assist in the training of male nursing orderlies, and instruct A.A.M.W.S. nursing orderlies.

Their service in hospital ships has brought losses to their numbers —in the sinking of the hospital ship *Centaur* in 1943, 11 sisters, including the matron of the ship, were lost, and in the bombing of Darwin Harbour in 1942 one sister was killed and another seriously wounded in a hospital ship.

Wherever they go, and wherever they serve, the 3,000 odd members of the A.A.N.S. are welcomed by the Australian soldier and universally loved by him for their untiring and unselfish service.

## AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ARMY SERVICE

*In less than three years the Australian Woman's Army Service has grown from nothing to a strength of approximately* 20,000, *and, in every phase of its activities, has proved an invaluable addition to the A.M.F.*

A New Guinea native who won the M.M. in action against the Japanese.

Japanese prisoner of war in New Guinea.

25-pounder being manhandled through the mud at Langemak Bay, New Guinea.

Wounded Australian passes tank at Satelberg. New Guinea.

War Cabinet approved the formation of the A.W.A.S. on August 13, 1941. A Controller was appointed in October of that year, but there was no recruiting for the Service until January, 1942.

Between October and the commencement of recruiting, a small group of officer personnel was selected as the nucleus of the organisation in each State, and the group attended a special officers' school.

Recruits poured in to the Service all over Australia, and by the end of 1942 there were 11,699 enlistments. The first Recruit Training Schools, which were set up in each State, were held in January and February, 1942.

A feature of the A.W.A.S. is that every recruit must enlist in the ranks and do her full Recruit Training Course before receiving commissioned rank, even if she is being enlisted for a specialist job.

Close on the heels of the Recruit Training Schools, N.C.O's Schools were established, and in October, 1942, the permanent A.W.A.S. Officers' Training School was inaugurated. Later, the O.T.S. became A.W.S.O.S.—Army Women's Services Officers' School—to train officer students both of the A.W.A.S. and A.A.M.W.S., including the physiotherapists and other specialists attached to the latter.

Much to the chagrin of A.W.A.S., their area of service is restricted to Australia, but they are serving all over the Commonwealth, as far north as they are needed in Queensland and Western Australia, and through Central Australia and the Northern Territory.

They are employed as W/T operators, draughtswomen, photo-writers, telephonists, photographers, laboratory assistants, clerks, cooks, stenographers, storekeepers, seamstresses, transport and motor drivers, tailoresses, signalwomen, adding machine operators, fabric workers, instrument operators—including plotters for battery plotting rooms and predictor operators for anti-aircraft batteries—typists, teleprinter operators, canteen attendants, textile refitters, equipment repairers, radio mechanics, despatch riders, rangetakers (for Coast Artillery), wireless mechanics, waitresses, orderlies, salvage workers, messwomen and stewardesses.

A.W.A.S., in fact, are working in every branch and section of the Army doing jobs formerly done by men, and doing those jobs as well as the men whom they have released for field duties in battle areas.

In the Corps of Signals alone, A.W.A.S. have released 4,000 men from base and headquarters jobs for essential communications work on the fighting front. In many other arms of the A.M.F. they form the greater percentage of personnel in units, and in some cases the

total personnel. For instance, many of Australia's anti-aircraft searchlight stations are completely manned by A.W.A.S., and in numbers of the Car Companies and Ambulance Car Companies all the drivers are A.W.A.S.

In just the same way as the rank and file, A.W.A.S. officers are doing work formerly done by male officers. For example, a major is D.A.D.C. in the Directorate of Stores and Clothing, M.G.O.'s Branch, and an A.W.A.S. lieutenant is O.C. of one of the sub-sections dealing with ammunition in the Directorate of Armament, M.G.O.'s Branch.

In addition there are A.W.A.S. officers in all branches, services and directorates of the Army to handle all matters relevant to the Army Women's Services.

A.W.A.S., too, both officers and other ranks, are doing highly specialised jobs and secret work which have an important and direct bearing on the safety of the fighting soldier and the successful outcome of battle operations—hush-hush work such as the compiling of operational maps, and specialised jobs such as the testing of "walkie talkie" radios after they have been tropic-proofed, the testing of Army food supplies, and the collating and mathematical checking of scientific and technical problems being handled by the Operational Research Section.

To all their work as members of the A.M.F. in their own particular service, no matter how monotonous their job, A.W.A.S. have brought a keenness and a desire to serve which is the admiration of all male members of the A.M.F. with whom they have worked and are working.

They are certainly pulling their full weight in helping to provide the power behind the Army machine in the forward areas, and have done much to solve the Army's manpower problem.

## AUSTRALIAN ARMY MEDICAL WOMEN'S SERVICE

*Although the Australian Army Medical Women's Service is the junior of the three Army Women's Services, many of its members saw service in this war before the formation of the A.W.A.S.*

This seeming anomaly occurs because the A.A.M.W.S. is the Army formation of the former V.A.Ds., an organisation which was given official recognition by the Australian Government in 1916, and many of whose members took up duty as voluntary auxiliaries to the Australian Army Medical Corps immediately on the outbreak of war in 1939.

The formation of the A.A.M.W.S. was brought about by the same reason which necessitated the formation of the A.W.A.S.—shortage of manpower. In the Army Medical Services this manpower shortage led to the application of V.A's to jobs far beyond the scope of those they had done previously, but which they could do equally as well as men, and it was decided that administration would be facilitated if such workers were enlisted in the Army.

Accordingly, on December 18, 1942, the formation of the A.A.M.W.S. was approved to work under the supervision of the Director-General of Medical Services.

Since that date the A.A.M.W.S., like the A.W.A.S., has gone from strength to strength, until to-day its members serve in dozens of varying capacities in hospital units throughout Australia and in New Guinea. They also serve in hospital ships. For, unlike the A.W.A.S., members of the A.A.M.W.S. are permitted to enlist as members of the A.I.F. and serve outside Australian territory.

They form an essential part of the staffs in A.G.Hs., camp hospitals, R.A.Ps. and convalescent depots, and in hospital laundry, dental and blood and serum units.

In these hospital units they are working as nursing orderlies, cooks, clerks, radiographers, laboratory assistants, dispensers, tailoresses, switchboard operators, operating theatre assistants, messwomen, laundry women, office orderlies, seamstresses and dental orderlies, and also in administrative and general duties.

Some members of the A.A.M.W.S. are specialists, such as dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and pathology assistants, many of whom, like the original V.As., who formed the nucleus of the A.A.M.W.S., have seen overseas service in the Middle East, Ceylon, Malaya and New Guinea, and in hospital ships.

One member of the A.A.M.W.S. was awarded the British Empire Medal for meritorious service in a hospital ship in 1943.

The organisation of the A.A.M.W.S. is similar to that of the A.W.A.S., with a Controller at L.H.Q. and assistant controllers in all Line of Communication Areas. A.A.M.W.S. attend Recruit Training Schools, N.C.Os. Schools and A.W.S.O.S. with members of the A.W.A.S., with a slight variation in the various courses to suit the particular needs of their hospital work.

Additionally an L.H.Q., A.A.M.W.S. Nursing Orderlies' Training School was established in 1944, where special training in nursing orderly duties is given A.A.M.W.S. by Tutor Sisters of the A.A.N.S.

Now about 6,000 strong after an existence of only 18 months, the A.A.M.W.S. is playing a large part in helping with the Army Medical Service's all-important work of caring for sick and wounded servicemen and restoring them to health and strength.

# MANPOWER

*The major administrative problem that has faced the Australian Army since the outbreak of the Pacific war has been the relation of urgent Service needs to the availability of manpower, of an age and degree of physical fitness, capable of fighting in the exacting conditions imposed by conditions peculiar to this theatre of war.*

When the European war began in September, 1939, Australia had a Militia force of 80,000 men, only partly trained, supplemented by a small force of permanent soldiers and a Staff Corps of trained officers.

Recruitment of a special force of volunteers—the A.I.F.—for service anywhere in the world, began in September, 1939, and by January, 1944, approximately 425,000 had volunteered.

Supplementing this voluntary enlistment, the compulsory provisions of the Defence Act were put into effect in November, 1939, when the first class of eligible men was called up for full-time duty for home defence.

Other classes were called up progressively until, in July, 1943, all available eligible men between the ages of 18 and 40 years were on duty. Those aged between 40 and 60 years were liable for service in the Civil Construction Corps, which was responsible for the building of aerodromes, landing strips, roads and other strategical works essential not only for effective defence of the Australian mainland, but also for its development as a base for offensive operations.

Compulsory enlistments in the Citizen Military Forces (inaccurately referred to as the "militia") aggregated 270,000 by January, 1944. Tens of thousands of these men were, by reason of their lower medical classification, debarred from enlistment in the A.I.F., but were employed on line of communication and a variety of other duties, not only on the mainland, but beyond it.

From the pool of manpower, obviously limited by the total population of seven millions, had to come, too, Australia's commitments under the Empire Air Training Scheme, as well as personnel for that portion of the R.A.A.F., which was retained for operational duty in the South-West Pacific Area, and for the Royal Australian Navy.

Security considerations preclude any indication of the present strength of the Australian Army, but it is the maximum compatible

with the equally pressing demands of the sister Services, for the maintenance of essential industries, for the staffing of munitions factories and for food production, the last-named to service Allied as well as Australian fighting personnel.

In this last-mentioned respect, it has been necessary to release from military service, over a period of months, 20,000 men for employment in food production and processing. Few of those men were taken from the major combatant units ; many were " B " class men, who, while suitable for line of communication duties, were not of sufficiently high physical standard to be employed in areas of actual battle. In many instances their former duties have been taken over by members of the Australian Women's Army Service.

Harvesting of seasonal crops has, from time to time, dictated the employment of soldiers as farm-workers. Such releases have been, however, only temporary, and have been made from static units or from formations which were not, at relevant times, committed to an immediate operational role, and the men concerned have been returned to their units in time to complete their training and fulfil operational programmes.

By this co-ordination of supply and fighting needs, it has been possible to maintain the Australian Army at an extraordinarily high standard of numerical and combatant efficiency.

The impossibility, because of security reasons, of disclosing details of such temporary releases and permanent discharges has prompted occasionally erroneous estimates of present and future Army strengths. The resultant inaccuracy is particularly accented when coupled with unofficial estimates of wastage in manpower resulting from the incidence of tropical diseases and physical deterioration inseparable from nearly five years of war. The figure of 20,000 mentioned above represents, however, the maximum specific discharge commitment of the Australian Army for any industrial or comparable purpose.

The inaccuracy of such uninformed estimates of Army strength is comparable with the fallacious opinion, often expressed, that the A.I.F.—that portion of the Australian Army enlisted to serve anywhere in the world—consists of only three divisions, the 6th, 7th and 9th, which served in the Middle East, and that the rest of the Australian Army comprises the so-called " militia," committed only to serve in a defined area, the northernmost limit of which is the equator.

Although figures may not be quoted, the truth is that there is no completely " militia " formation in the Australian Army.

Many reasons exist for the misconception of a three-division A.I.F. Chief of these is the several stages through which development

of the Army has passed since September, 1939. The raising of the expeditionary force, a division at a time, was dictated by Imperial planning, and enlistments, in fact, exceeded commitments. Except in the early phases of the war, the basic strength of the A.I.F. has never been so low as three divisions. The 8th Division, portion of which was lost in Malaya, was, for instance, an A.I.F. formation. So, too, were the armoured units, although, because of the Japanese threat, they were retained for mainland defence.

With the general application of the compulsory provisions of the Defence Act, another complication was introduced. It was national policy at that time not to enlist into the A.I.F. men under the age of 19 years, even though they became liable for service—and were called up—at 18 years. In consequence, many thousands of men served up to a year in the "militia" before changing their personal status to A.I.F. That policy has been reviewed latterly, and men may, on reaching the age for service elect to join either the A.I.F. or the R.A.A.F. for air crew duty or the R.A.N., but the Army may not send youths to operational areas until they reach the age of 19 years.

Related to this misconception is the idea frequently expressed that only the three best-known formations (A.I.F.) have been engaged in active operations in the South-West Pacific Area. This ignorance may be attributed in part to the command system which it was found expedient to adopt in the New Guinea operations. The exacting nature of these operations dictated periodical reliefs of individual units while leaving the area command undisturbed until the planning programme was completed. For obvious reasons of security the reliefs were not announced publicly.

In the Owen Stanley and the Buna-Gona-Sanananda campaigns, for instance, so-called "militia" units served under command of an A.I.F. formation. This practice was followed in later campaigns, again without disclosing to the enemy variations in the order of battle.

The complete truth is that in the South-West Pacific Area the Australian Army has fought as a unified command, and has been employed as required, irrespective of whether the uninformed have affixed the labels "A.I.F." or "Militia" to particular formations.

To under-score this truth, it is necessary only to repeat the statement made in an earlier page that the aggregate number of Australian troops employed in New Guinea has approximated the equivalent of probably ten divisions.

# SERVICES BEHIND THE FIGHTING TROOPS

*Ingenuity of the branches servicing the fighting troops, and the rapid application of lessons learned in the field were responsible in high degree for the successes of the Australian Army in the South-West Pacific Area.*

This new type of warfare involved many fundamental changes, not only in training, but also in clothing, equipment, arms, rations, medical treatment and communications. The process of change is still going on, and will go on until the war ends.

Improvisation was forced upon the Australian Army in the early stages, but as Australian industry became geared to war production the soldier was progressively re-equipped and re-fitted in accordance with plans made by the several Service departments. To-day no soldier in the world is better equipped than the Australian to fight in the jungle.

## ARTILLERY

*One of the more spectacular results of the Army's programme is the production of the "short" 25-pounder field gun.*

In early days of the New Guinea campaign, it was realised that a lighter gun equipment than the normal 25-pounder was desirable for mountain and jungle warfare, and efforts were made to obtain the British 3·7-inch or the U.S. 75-mm. pack howitzer. Neither of these was available at that time, and experiments were therefore initiated to evolve a lightened equipment, with, as far as possible, the "knock-down" characteristics of the pack howitzers.

While experiments were proceeding the first use was made of normal 25-pounders in the Owen Stanley fighting. By stupendous labour a few "knocked-down" guns were got forward, largely by sledge, over the commencement of the Kokoda trail and used against the Japs. Later, 25-pounders were transported over the range by air and were employed in the Buna fighting. A few other equipments were also used there, and the employment of artillery in this engagement became increasingly effective.

Difficulties of transport, however, encouraged the belief that a lighter gun would offer particular advantages in certain circumstances so the manufacture of the "baby" gun proceeded, and a limited number was available for use in the operations against Lae and Finschhafen.

For the attack on Lae, it was essential to seize an airstrip site at

Nadzab. This was done by U.S. paratroops, accompanied by Australian gunners, also dropped by parachute, who took with them the first "short" 25-pounders to be used in action.

Ballistically, the "baby" gun is not quite the equal of its big brother, but its "knock-down" characteristics and portability make it a valuable complement in certain circumstances, of which the Lae operation provided a striking example. These characteristics also make it very easy to handle in and out of landing craft, or on tracks where a jeep is the only practicable towing vehicle.

For jungle conditions, special provision must be made to keep ammunition serviceable. Research and development to improve the keeping qualities of ammunition, and to produce lighter and more efficient packages to protect rounds from the effects of high temperatures, extreme humidity, and rough handling in transit are, therefore, always proceeding. A distinct improvement has been achieved, but continual supervision is essential.

## RATIONS

*Possibly the greatest changes have been made in rations supplied to Australian troops.*

Primarily these alterations were prompted by efforts to overcome difficulties in delivering supplies to troops fighting in the jungle; secondly, to reduce the weight carried by the individual soldier; finally, to overcome nutritional deficiencies.

In the early Owen Stanley fighting of 1942, rations were restricted to six basic commodities—tea, sugar, dried milk, tinned meat, salt and biscuit. Twelve months later troops were provided with a ration of 33 constituents.

Progress to this objective was made in stages, the first of which was realised even before the 1942 Australian drive had passed beyond the mountain range.

While the major objective always has been to supply fresh food to the fighting soldier, there have been many obstacles to its accomplishment, principally shortage of refrigerated shipping space and supply line difficulties. In the Markham Valley campaign in 1943, however, frozen meat and bread were being supplied 12 days after the paratroop landing cleared the way for our attack. All supplies had to be transported by air. Later, even forward troops were supplied with fresh food, including vegetables, twice weekly.

To implement its fresh food programme the Australian Army maintains in certain advanced areas its own field bakeries, field butcheries and vegetable gardens, and an Army Marine Food Supply Platoon is now firmly established in New Guinea waters, regularly supplying fresh fish, primarily to hospitals.

Where fresh vegetables cannot be supplied, troops receive an equivalent quantity of dehydrated or tinned vegetables.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary to provide the soldier with a recently devised—and successful—three-meal operation ration. In extreme cases he may be compelled to rely on his special emergency ration, which is capable of sustaining him in the field for a limited period.

All experiments conducted by the Army were based on the knowledge that a man requires about 5 lb. of fresh food per day. From that point it set itself the task of producing an operation ration of minimum weight and with maximum nutritional content.

The three-meal operation ration weights 3¾ lb. gross, and may be eaten without preparation. Nutritional qualities have not been lost in the processing. Each meal is packed separately and the whole sealed in a can, which may be dropped free from the air. For more convenient carriage the meals may be removed from the can and packed separately in the soldier's equipment.

The problem of feeding troops in jungle country has involved much more than merely reducing weight, preserving nutritients and introducing variety whilst maintaining balance in the diet. There were difficulties of maintaining regular supplies and of overcoming losses caused by tropical conditions. Maintenance by air has become a regular feature of the New Guinea campaigns. The difficulties of rapid deterioration in tropical areas have been met by special packaging, which involves tropic proofing including mould and rust control.

Briefly, the Australian Army's ration programme for a soldier detailed, say, for an amphibious operation, would be as follows :— He begins at Base with the ordinary area ration ; on the transport he gets a special transport ration ; in a landing craft he receives another special ration containing food in convenient form and drugs to control sea-sickness. Once ashore he takes the three-meal operation ration plus the emergency ration. Supplies of the operation ration are maintained to him. As a variation, the six-man ration may be supplied containing sufficient supplies to sustain six men for one day. Once supply depots are established, the soldier reverts to the area ration. With consolidation, field bakeries open up, refrigeration is provided and fresh vegetables and meat are issued. Eventually Army farms begin production, fishing platoons operate, and possibly poultry farms are established.

## EQUIPMENT

Practically every item of equipment used by the Australian Army —and there are more than 200,000—has been treated or revised in some way as the result of experience in New Guinea.

Indicative of the thoroughness with which the Army has approached the task of defeating the jungle and the tropics is perhaps the fact that even bootlaces have received attention. These used to last only three days in the jungle ; they last far longer now.

There were two distinct problems which the Army had to resolve in New Guinea. One was the lightening of the soldier's burden ; the other was protection of clothing and equipment against the rapid deterioration caused by intense heat and humidity.

When the 1942 offensive was undertaken, troops climbing the mountain trails had to carry individual loads of up to 90 lbs. In part, that necessity was dictated by inability to service him from the air ; in part, because we were only then beginning to apply the lessons which we had learnt—the hard way—in previous weeks.

Now, however, the Australian soldier travels comparatively lightly-laden. All his equipment has come under review in just the same thorough way as did his bootlaces.

He wears a new boot of special type which not only gives him a foothold in the mud and slime, but which is resistant to the natural ravages of the tropics ; his socks do not shrink ; he is protected against mud by a new-type gaiter.

His clothes—long trousers and shirt—have been designed for the jungle with the same care as his training ; even the buttons are sewn on with a thread which has been treated to make it rot-proof ; neither steel nor plastic buttons are used ; but buttons of a special material which neither rusts nor attracts rats.

Shirts and trousers are rot-proofed and mosquito-proofed, yet there are no abrasive surfaces which might cause other ills. There is a special jungle beret to wear as the alternative to the felt slouch hat.

Even the wooden cases in which clothing, equipment and food were sent to the tropics had to be treated, because the stoutest of them would be ruined by ants or the weather in a few days. Tents, too, became useless rapidly until the Army found a means of proofing them against rot.

Simultaneously with the application of these protective measures, the Army was progressively introducing adjustments, alterations and new ideas in equipment recommended by battle-experienced men, and proved in the testing stage under actual battle conditions.

Jungle experience has shown that our basic weapons meet the demands of this type of warfare ; so attention has been concentrated, not on the devising of substitutes, but in the reduction of weight where that can be done without loss in performance.

Indicative of the problems which had to be met in adapting equipment to tropical jungle conditions is the necessity of ensuring ability to break-down into man-pack loads. The practicable limit

is 40 lbs. ; the preferable weight 35 lbs. In the case of ammunition, for instance, it is necessary not only to ensure that each round is water-tight, but also to pack it in sealed and protected metal containers, and yet to limit the weight to the man-pack total.

Personal equipment is so designed as to permit loads to be carried firmly and high on the body—with no pieces swinging and no bulges that might foul a weapon in ambush, when life depends on instant action.

The Australian jungle fighter carries no "fancy" equipment. A waterproof wallet contains a few personal belongings, special large pouches carry ammunition and rations, the haversack has extra pockets for personal clothing. A roll includes a lightweight blanket, a half-shelter tent, and perhaps a gas cape or lightweight waterproof poncho to give protection from persistent rain. Mess tins are light and of more convenient design. "Canned-heat" and small folding cooking stand may be carried ; perhaps a machete to carve a trail. Gear, in fact, is reduced to simplicity.

## SIGNALS

*Possibly no individual branch of the Army has had to work so rapidly as the Corps of Signals to counter the ravages of the tropics.*

The Corps has had to protect its equipment against not only rain, mud, dust and steamy heat, but also against fungus, which rapidly destroys electrical equipment.

It has found the answer to that particular danger, and to many more as well, while at the same time establishing and maintaining—on the mainland and beyond—a system of communications beyond the comprehension of pre-war Australia.

New radio sets, new telephones, new signal wires have been produced by the Corps to meet conditions. It has turned out, too, new telegraph poles—collapsible, portable, quickly manufactured, rust-proof, and ant-proof—and has beaten the jungle by evolving new methods of laying wires. It has found also the counter to the violent electrical storms of the tropics.

The Corps' newest radio for field use answers every known demand of the jungle army. It is waterproof and buoyant, every individual unit is proofed against fungus and the other ills of the tropics, it has range not previously realised in jungle and mountain country, it is compact and of light weight, and its technical qualities represent new developments in this field of communications.

## MEDICAL SERVICE

*The tremendous advances made by other branches of the Service in defeating the jungle have been paralleled by the Australian*

*Army Medical Corps in combating tropical diseases, as well as in field surgery.*

The A.A.M.C. has made full use of modern developments in medicine and surgery. Surgical teams provided with modern equipment operate in the most forward areas. The soldier wounded in battle receives the best surgical treatment within a few hours. Ample supplies of penicillin are available for all battle casualties.

The Medical Service has had little to say in public about its methods, because the Japanese lags far behind in tropical hygiene, but the knowledge it has acquired has been passed to the Empire and Allied countries likely to be concerned.

Whatever the methods which it employed, the fact is that the A.A.M.C. has converted disease-ridden plague spots in New Guinea to healthy centres, which, as the result of its efforts, have now been converted into busy ports—forward bases for the Allied advance towards Japanese home territory.

Malaria, though still a menace, has been largely controlled, and great advances are still being made as a result of special research carried out by the A.A.M.C. The A.A.M.C. has made the Army malaria conscious and has taught the troops how to protect themselves against malaria and other tropical diseases. The sick rate in many parts of New Guinea is actually lower than on the mainland.

Great advances have been made in prevention and treatment of other tropical diseases. Use of the new drug, sulphaguanidine, which is now made in large quantities in Australia, has conquered dysentery.

## SUMMARY

This, in the very general terms dictated by security, is an indication of the continual research by the Army's services which has made possible the victories achieved by the Australian Army in the South-West Pacific Area.

There are numerous other activities, as, for instance, the Army's own navy of small ships, which ply regularly in dangerous waters and on dangerous missions, using sometimes native canoes, at other times craft of up to 300 tons.

There are, too, the amenities and education services, which cater for the entertainment of even the most forward troops and help prepare them for their ultimate return to civil life ; the Army's own newspapers, published seven days a week, and distributed to the most advanced troops—possibly the only newspapers which contain only the world's news without comment.

All have contributed in some degree to the making of the Australian Army which is treading the road to final, complete victory, and will not turn aside until that victory is realised.

# DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

THE following Decorations and Awards have been won by members of the Australian Army since September, 1939 :

## VICTORIA CROSS

| | |
|---|---|
| Cpl. J. H. EDMONDSON | North Africa |
| Pte. J. H. GORDON | Syria |
| Lieut. A. R. CUTLER | Syria |
| Lt.-Col. C. G. W. ANDERSON | Malaya |
| Pte. A. S. GURNEY | North Africa |
| Cpl. J. A. FRENCH | Papua |
| Sgt. W. H. KIBBY | North Africa |
| Pte. P. E. GRATWICK | North Africa |
| Pte. B. S. KINGSBURY | Papua |
| Pte. R. KELLIHER | New Guinea |
| Sgt. T. DERRICK | New Guinea |

Sgt. Derrick had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry in the Western Desert in 1942. He is the only V.C. winner to have won a previous decoration.

| AWARD | TOTAL |
|---|---|
| Victoria Cross | 11 |
| G.B.E. (Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire) | 1 |
| K.C.B. (Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath) | 2 |
| C.B. (Companion of the Order of the Bath) | 8 |
| K.B.E. (Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire) | 4 |
| C.B.E. (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) | 48 |
| O.B.E. (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) | 92 |
| M.B.E. (Member of the Order of the British Empire) | 105 |
| Knight of Grace of Order of St. John of Jerusalem | 2 |
| D.S.O. (Companion of the Distinguished Service Order) | 118 |
| D.S.O. Bar | 14 |
| M.C. (Military Cross) | 288 |
| M.C. Bar | 7 |
| R.R.C. (Royal Red Cross) | 7 |
| A.R.R.C. (Associate Royal Red Cross) | 1 |
| D.C.M. (Distinguished Conduct Medal) | 135 |
| *Carried forward* | 843 |

| AWARD | TOTAL |
|---|---|
| *Brought forward* | 843 |
| M.M. (Military Medal) | 584 |
| M.M. Bar | 5 |
| B.E.M. (British Empire Medal) | 49 |
| George Medal | 3 |
| King's Commendation | 2 |
| M.I.D. (Mention in Despatches) | 2,377 |
| Distinguished Service Cross (U.S.A.) | 9 |
| Silver Star (U.S.A.) | 10 |
| Soldier's Medal (U.S.A.) | 2 |
| Legion of Merit (U.S.A.) | 1 |
| Lebanese | 1 |
| Order of the Red Star (Soviet) | 1 |
| Order of Patriotic War 1st Class (Soviet) | 2 |
| Bronze Cross (Netherlands) | 2 |
| Greek Military Cross (Class A) | 11 |
| Greek Military Cross (Class C) | 1 |
| Virtuti Military (Polish) | 1 |
| Cross of Valour (Polish) | 1 |
| TOTAL | 3,905 |

# AUSTRALIAN ARMY'S WAR DIARY

## MIDDLE EAST AND U.K.

| | |
|---|---|
| 15 Dec. '39 | Advance party of Australians embark for the Middle East. |
| 11 Jan. '40 | First Australian convoy (6th Aust. Div.) sails for Middle East. |
| 16 Jun. '40 | First Australian units arrive in UNITED KINGDOM. |
| 3 Jan. '41 | Australian troops attack and penetrate BARDIA defences. |
| 5 Jan. '41 | BARDIA falls. |
| 22 Jan. '41 | TOBRUK falls. |
| 30 Jan. '41 | Australians enter DERNA. |
| 6 Feb. '41 | BENGHAZI surrenders to Australians. |
| 21 Mar. '41 | Australians capture GIARABUB. |
| 24 Mar. '41 | British and Australians commence withdrawal from area of EL AGHEILA. |
| 10 Apr. '41 | Last Australian rearguard reaches TOBRUK. |
| 10 Apr. '41 | First engagement of Australian and German forces on GREEK front. |
| 14 Apr. '41 | First major Axis attack on TOBRUK fails. |
| 20 Apr. '41 | British and Anzac forces in GREECE withdraw to THERMOPYLAE LINE. |
| 24 Apr. '41 | Evacuation of GREECE begins. Australians arrive in CRETE. |
| 20 May '41 | German paratroops land in CRETE. |
| 31 May '41 | British and Anzac Forces evacuated from SPHAKIA. |
| 8 June '41 | Australians cross SYRIAN FRONTIER. TYRE surrenders. |
| 21 June '41 | Fall of DAMASCUS. |
| 9 July '41 | DAMOUR taken after bloody fighting. |
| 12 July '41 | Cease fire. French resistance ceases. |
| 4 Feb. '42 | Australians commence embarking for Australia at SUEZ. |
| 10 July '42 | Ninth Australian Division goes into action at ALAMEIN. |
| 23 Oct. '42 | Ninth Australian Division launches first attack in the British thrust at EL ALAMEIN. |
| 1 Feb. '43 | Ninth Australian Division sails for AUSTRALIA at SUEZ. |

## MALAYA

| | |
|---|---|
| 18 Feb. '41 | Units of the Eighth Australian Division arrive in MALAYA. |
| 14 Jan. '42 | Australian troops make first contact with Japanese forces in MALAYA. |
| 15 Feb. '42 | Fall of SINGAPORE. |

## SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC

| | |
|---|---|
| 17 Dec. '41 | Australian and Dutch forces enter TIMOR. |
| 18 Feb. '42 | Australian troops arrive in JAVA. |
| 23 Jan. '42 | Japanese land at RABAUL. |
| 27 Feb. '42 | Japanese land in JAVA. |
| 19 Feb. '42 | Australian troops resist Japanese landing in TIMOR. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7 Mar. '42 | Japanese land at LAE and SALAMAUA. |
| 10 Mar. '42 | Japanese land at FINSCHHAFEN. |
| 21 July '42 | Japanese land at GONA. |
| 23 July '42 | First contact between Australians and Japanese at AWALA. |
| 10 Aug. '42 | Australian troops withdraw from KOKODA. |
| 25 Aug. '42 | Australians oppose Japanese landing at MILNE BAY. After bitter fighting Japanese forces are withdrawn by sea on September 5, having suffered their first decisive defeat in the SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC. |
| 28 Sept. '42 | Australians re-take Eoribaiwa Ridge in the first stage of the Owen Stanleys offensive. |
| 2 Nov. '42 | Australians re-capture KOKODA. |
| 9 Nov. '42 | Australians re-take GORARI. |
| 11 Nov. '42 | Australians capture OIVI. |
| 13 Nov. '42 | Australians capture WAIROPI. |
| 9 Dec. '42 | Australians occupy GONA. |
| 19 Dec. '42 | Australians and Americans capture CAPE ENDAIDIERE. |
| 2 Jan. '43 | Australians and Americans re-capture BUNA. |
| 14 Jan. '43 | Australians and Americans take SANANANDA. |
| 20 Jan. '43 | Australians defeat Japanese attack on WAU. |
| 3 Feb. '43 | Australians at Wau counter-attack and begin the drive to SALAMAUA. |
| 16 Mar. '43 | Japanese cleared from MUBO gardens. Area finally cleared July 13. |
| 21 Aug. '43 | Australians capture KOMIATUM RIDGE. |
| 4 Sept. '43 | Australians (9th Division) land at "Red Beach" on shore of Huon Gulf and begin drives to LAE and FINSCHHAFEN. |
| 5 Sept. '43 | American paratroops, Australian paratroop artillery and Australian engineers and pioneers seize NADZAB. |
| 7 Sept. '43 | Aerial movement of 7th Division into Markham Valley begins. |
| 11 Sept. '43 | Australians capture SALAMAUA. |
| 16 Sept. '43 | Australians take LAE. |
| 2 Oct. '43 | Australians take FINSCHHAFEN. |
| 4 Oct. '43 | Australians capture DUMPU (Ramu Valley). |
| 25 Nov. '43 | Australians drive Japanese from SATELBERG HEIGHTS. |
| 8 Dec. '43 | Australians capture WAREO. |
| 23 Jan. '44 | Australians capture SHAGGY RIDGE. |
| 10 Feb. '44 | Australians and Americans link up east of SAIDOR. |
| 13 Apr. '44 | Australians take BOGADJIM. |
| 24 Apr. '44 | Australians take MADANG. |
| 26 Apr. '44 | Australians take ALEXISHAFEN. |

Printed in Great Britain by Alabaster, Passmore & Sons, Ltd., London and Maidstone.
S.O. Code No. 88-2601*

(3553.) Wt. P235 11/44.

*There are many men and women in the Forces who would welcome a chance of reading this book. If you hand it in at any post office it will go to them.*

Cover printed by Fosh & Cross Ltd., London.