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17 Infantry Brigade
February - March 1941, Reports

R E P O R T

BY

MAJOR S. H. PORTER

ON

THE ACTIVITIES OF

THE 2/6 AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION.

REPORT BY MAJOR S. H. PORTER ON ACTIVITIES OF 2/6 AUST. INF. BN.

On 28 Jan. 41, I was engaged in the process of "taking over" Battalion from Lieut.-Col. A. H. L. Godfrey, M.C., E.D., when orders were received which resulted in my joining a Recce Party which eventually met the Brigadier at Kilo 31 on DERNA Road, at about 1630 hours. I was accompanied by my I.O., ~~for~~ Lt. H. L. Dunkley, a batman and driver.

17 Aust. Inf. Bde was to take over part of the front occupied by 19 Aust. Inf. Bde. and to extend it to the SOUTH. 2/6 Bn's. front extended from 120372 to ELUET GRAB 211295; and, I was to report to C.O. 19 Aust. Inf. Bde. at 0800 hours on 29 Jan. 41 for directions as to the manner of obtaining information and of effecting liason with the 4th Bn. on the R and 6 Aust. Div. Cav. on the L. Burdened with a mild anxiety as to the possibility of effectively reconnoitring the large front allotted to me, in the time that was set by the prearranged R.V. with my O Group, I felt dissatisfied with my liason on the R. Flank and the remote possibilities of discovering Maj. Onslow of the 6 Aust. Div. Cav. "somewhere to the SOUTH". I therefore determined to begin by exploring well to the SOUTH of WADI HESKIA with a view to locating my S. Limit, and then to make a series of excursions to the front in order to effectively survey it and to choose F.D.L's. By accident I contacted a portion of the 7th Armd. Div. just S of ELUET GRAB who gave me meagre information relating to enemy activity in exchange for information relating to our own forces in the N. At 1200 hours, I had completed my outline plan and proceeded to deliver it to my "O" Group. In a further recce I found myself within 10 feet of the minefield running N & S across the front; and, not only contacted a party of engineers, disarming it, but found Maj. Onslow, to receive a more detailed account of recent enemy activity. It appeared to me that the enemy was covering his minefield obstacle with standing patrols only, at likely approaches; but, that such patrols were well handled, as was testified by Maj. Onslow's casualties.

At 1500 hours I held a co-ordinating conference with my O Group; and, we were then ready to place the F Group in position - Locality defence with Coys. in a "T" shaped layout, based on the WADI HESKIA. "B" Coy. was at 220340; "A" Coy. at 220320; "C" Coy. at 210295; "D" Coy. at 250313; and Bn. H.Q. at 240318.

It was quite dark when the troop carriers of F Group arrived. Troops debussed in the dark and gained their positions over rough country, without damage to vehicles. This was due to the thoroughness of the Coy. Comdrs! recce plus good fortune.

At 1400 hrs., 30 JAN. 41, acting upon Bde. orders, I moved "D" Coy. from its reserve position to patrol the WADI DERNA with a view to discovering a vehicle crossing. At the same time "A" and "C" Coys. were ordered to patrol the minefield with a view to discovering gaps and marking them; or, if necessary, to disarm a passage through, with the aid of engineer personnel and pioneers who were attached for the purpose. Although "D" Coy. patrolled constantly during the day and the night following, no crossing was discovered; but, "A" Coy., by exploiting the portion of the minefield which the engineers had disarmed, managed to clear a passage and mark it. The latter was along the N bank of the WADI HESKIA.

At 0800 hours on 31 JAN. 41, I received orders to advance through the above gap in the minefield. The Bn., with attached troops moved punctually at the starting time 1010 hrs., in the order: A, C, Bn. H.Q., H.Q. Coy., B. "D" Coy. remained,

Cheshires

2. (remained.)

under Bde. orders, at the WADI DERNA, on the L Flank of the then 2/5 Bn. position. Each of A and B Coys. had 1 Pl. 17 Bde. A/T Coy. attached under command. During the advance the R Gp. moved at the head of the column and kept a traverse of the route. This latter I deemed advisable, owing to the difficulties experienced in orientating oneself with the map. 1 Coy Cheshires and 1 Sec 2/2 Fd Coy were u/comd. 1 Bty 2/2 Fd Reg were in support. The latter moved in rear. By 1700 hrs. I chose a position astride the GIOVANNI BERTA Rd., a little beyond the objective laid down for the day, where a fold between a relatively high feature and a minor feature offered protection for transport. We assumed a perimeter defence, with H.Q. Coy. on the rear and more protected aspect. Patrols were sent out which reported a large number of vehicles moving some miles to the W. I investigated this, and, although no immediate satisfaction was obtained, it subsequently transpired that they were A.F.V's. of the 7 Armd. Div. At dusk, upon orders from the Bde. H.Q., a carrier ~~patrol~~ patrol set out to investigate a possible crossing of the WADI DERNA, N of our position. They encountered stout resistance by the enemy who withheld his fire until the carriers were within 150 yards; and, with machine guns, A/T guns and mortars, fired on fixed lines.

Two factors saved Lt. Warfe and his men from becoming casualties: the light and the folding nature of the approach. I requested permission to attack, if such did not prejudice the 2/5 Bn., with artillery support; but, wisely, permission was withheld until first light next day. After conference with the Brigadier, I spent the greater portion of the remainder of the night in preparation. Orders are appended.

Lt. Warfe again demonstrated his courage, dash, quick thinking and cool observation powers, by placing his own carrier in an extricating position, while his other vehicles withdrew; then, by reversing his carrier out with L.M.G. firing. When he returned, he provided me with speedometer readings to measure the position of the enemy; an accurate description of the ground between our position and the enemy; an estimation of the extent of the enemy front; and, the compass bearing of his advance. His carrier had been hit.

The attack was controlled by light signals and the establishment of an artillery O.P., well forward. It caused the retirement of the enemy while the subsequent exploitation produced 350 odd prisoners. Our only loss was one man wounded in the patrol of the previous night. Patrols pushed W up the WADI DERNA during the remainder of the day. Also, during the day, D Coy. rejoined us and the Bn. altered its position about one mile to the N and W with "A" Coy. controlling the WADI DERNA from a position astride it at 052419 (GIOVANNI BERTA 1:100 000). 2/7 Bn. moved up behind us to occupy our original position

On 2 Feb. 1941 at 0900 hrs., we moved to take up position ready to support an attack on a fortified area at 939456 (GIOVANNI BERTA 1:100 000 map) by 2/7 Bn. Attached to us were 2 Pls. 17 A/T Coy., 1 Tp. P Bty. R.H.A. and 1 Bty. 2/3 Fd. Regt.

Our roles were: a/ to protect L flank of 2/7 Bn. from attack from SW, during initial stages; b/ to conform with the advance of 2/7 Bn.; then, turn SW to take posts on road running from the fort; or, to exploit NW through 2/7 Bn.

After taking up position 2 kilos SE of this ~~fort~~ fort

the enemy was found to have vacated it; and, an immediate advance on GIOVANNI BERTA followed a mobile recce patrol which had been sent out to discover the presence or otherwise of the enemy in the latter town, and had reported it unoccupied.

We suffered, as result of the congestion of traffic caused by various sub-units of artillery pressing through the fort, en route, plus the bad road discipline of a certain M.M.G. Bn.; but, our recce party which I hurried forward was able to lead us into position W of GIOVANNI BERTA, covering W road approaches, in the dark. Footsoreness, due to unwashed socks was prevalent.

By 0730 hrs 3 FEB. 41, we were on our way W to GHEGAB and the main problem of the night march to GIOVANNI BERTA of the previous night again assailed us:- the time and road space problem. We ere now, unfortunately, inflicting the same delay upon units in rear as was inflicted upon us. With vehicles moving at marching pace and 100 yds. distance, an infantry Bn. takes a long time to pass a point. In an endeavour to hurry, I found myself three miles ahead of the column, searching for alternative routes which did not exist. Incidentally, GHEGAB was found to be unoccupied by enemy; so, I gave orders for L.M.G's. and A/T rifles to be mounted on transport, with skeleton sections and pushed the latter ahead of the marching column, into positions covering the township. This was calculated to speed up the advance in an effort to relieve the position in rear. I do not know the result; but, by the cheerful co-operation of Lt.-Col. Gremor, who actually carried the troops on limbers etc. and, by transport returning empty to pick up troops, the march came to a speedy end. We immediately set about bathing feet and were able to get a good night's rest.

Next day, 4 FEB. 41, the Unit moved to SLONTA, preceded by the R Group. A defensive position was assumed; but it soon became evident that the speed of the pursuit turned SLONTA into a rear area; and, the two days' of occupation were used to bath in improvised hot baths, repair boots and wash clothes. The only two features of note were the necessity of protecting ~~colonists~~ colonists from Arab looters - this was effected by patrols - and the difficulty of maintaining communication with the parent formation by wireless, due to the movement of such H.Q's. This latter difficulty prevailed during the following ^{day} when weather conditions, coupled with rapid movements, left long distances between unit and formation H.Q's.

After two nights at SLONTA the Unit set out for BARCE on 6 FEB. 41, again preceded by the R Group. To minimise words, the position can be summarised by stating that the R Gp. was misinformed as to the condition of passes down the escarpment to BARCE; and, in fact, found it impossible to continue the advance beyond the chosen debussing point, at about the 8 kilo post on the main road, without grave risk of losing vehicles. I bivouaced at this point for the night; and, next morning, sent transport around the now well-known detour while I led marching personnel over the blown road block to BARCE. Five of our vehicles were bogged en route; but, were recovered during the following days without their suffering any serious injury. We quartered ourselves in the present location and took over the maintenance of law and order in the town.

The events in this latter stage of the advance which featured several units moving on a narrow road, unco-ordinated, gives rise to the consideration of the various systems of

handling transport on the move. The failure of the system of moving ~~handling~~ units, in large convoys, without previous information on liason as between such units, was accentuated by the encountering of an obstacle and the habit of English units in M.T. halting on the middle of the road without signalling. The latter offenders appeared to be the R.N.F's., and, our vehicles had to risk bogging by getting off the established track, on numerous occasions. One feels that the following system would alleviate traffic difficulties and prevent "jams" in forward areas:

- a/ The establishment of control points, M.C. Provost personnel, advancing with forward troops and taking posts at regular intervals. This would serve:
 - i) to ensure correct V.T.M. and M.I.H.;
 - ii) to gain information of the intention of Comdrs. of Units; and, prevent accidents and mis-direction of sub-Units.
- b/ The movement of Units in blocks of say, 10 vehicles where possible.

In addition to the mention I have made of Lt. Warfe, I would like to commend the following Officers:

MAJOR G. F. SMITH for his successful efforts in getting the Unit on the move quickly, when such orders were received; and, for his strong support at all times.

CAPTAIN K. S. PICKEN for his untiring, quiet and efficient handling of administration matters throughout the movement.

LIEUTENANT H. L. DUNKLEY for his constant, efficient work with me in the R Group.

CAPTAIN H. A. DEANE and LT. W. H. SHERLOCK for their efficient carrying out of my orders at the WADI DERNA attack.

As well, I cannot speak too highly of the support given me by all officers; and, the efficiency and willingness of the troops brought forth a special expression of admiration from me.

APPENDIX "A"

Notes on Verbal Orders

Attack on WADI DERNA Crossing at 066430 (GIOVANNI BERTA 1:100,000)

INFORMATION Enemy
2/5 Bn

INTENTION To attack and seize track crossing 066,430 (called CROSSING)

METHOD Attack with 2 Coys A on R B on L

Objectives
A to cross WADI DERNA astride CROSSING and establish bridgehead on TRACK in square 06,44
B Coy to seize tributary Wadis and possible track at 055,430; to support A Coy from this position
Routes (Likely routes pointed out, as from information received from O.C. Carrier Pl.)
Starting Line - Running from Point 452 at 065,416 to DEEP WADI (named) at 036,417 as NOT BEFORE 0720
Preliminary moves
A Coy will move to area about Point 452 (065416)
B Coy. will move to DEEP WADI (036,417)
Both to be in position by 0500
Move at 0200
Supporting Fire
M.MG's 1 Pl CHESHIREs to move with B Coy - supporting fire to both Coys

ARTY
1/ Ranging - commencing at 0700 hrs ending 0720
2/ If necessary (see "Signals") sweep area of WADI DERNA crossings at 4 RPGM

MORTARS
1 Det with A Coy under command - Role quick support on opportunity targets

CARRIERS
Your role is purely demonstration, to see if we can "light up" the enemy fire plan, prematurely from his point of view, and enlighten us as to the extent of his front and the necessity or otherwise of task 2 arty. Try and keep out of danger; but, you can put some long range fire, from the vehicles, into the WADI. Operate in area surrounding spur 073,432 and make sure that the arty O.P. knows where you are, by contacting him on the way out. You are entrusted with firing the signal for task 2 arty and ZERO for tps. (This arrgt was threshed out later)

Direction of attack
A B (worked from map and re-checked)
Reserve
C Coy to remain in present position - Role to protect L flank

ADMIN
Dress - jerkins - keep warm
Carry a meal of biscuits and bully Expect to deliver a hot meal at WADI later

INTERCOMN
Bn HQ as at present
Report centre - will maintain telephone at A Coy's present postn
May use O.P. of arty by permission

Signals

- 1 Commence arty task 2 RED GREEN
- 2 ZERO for tps RED RED - 1 and 2 to be fired by Lt Warfe
- 3 Arty cease fire GREEN GREEN
- 4 Success signal GREEN RED GREEN - 3 and 4 to be fired by
Coy Comdrs

APPENDIX "B"

Date	Place	Troops under Command ad- ditional to 2/6 Bn	Troops in support
29 JAN	W HESKIA	1 Coy CHESHIRE Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	
30 "	do	do	
31 "	ADVANCE from W HESKIA to GIOVANNI BERTA Rd 055366 (G.B. Sheet)	1 Coy CHESHIRE 1 Sec 2/2 Fd Coy 1 Mob Sec R.A.M.C. 2 Pls 17 Bde A/T Coy Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	1 Bty 2/2 Fd Regt
1 FEB	GIOVANNI BERTA Rd at 055366 (G.B. Sheet)	1 Coy CHESHIRE 2 Pls 17 Bde A/T Coy 1 Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	1 Bty 2/2 Fd Regt Later other arty moved into area
2 FEB	ADVANCE to FORT 939456 (G.B. Sheet) then to GIOVANNI BERTA	1 Coy CHESHIRE 2 Pls 17 Bde A/T Coy 1 Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	1 Bty 2/3 Fd Regt
3 FEB	ADVANCE to CHEGAB 772480	1 Coy CHESHIRE 2 Pls 17 Bde A/T Coy 1 Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	1 Bty 2/2 Fd Regt
4 FEB	ADVANCE to SLONTA 487323	1 Coy CHESHIRE "P" Bty less 1 tp 2 Pls 17 Bde A/T Coy 4th Bty 2/2 Fd Regt 1 Sec 37 Lt A/ABty 2 Tps A Sqn 6 Aust Cav Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	
5 FEB	SLONTA	1 Coy CHESHIRE 2 Pls A/T Coy 4th Bty 2/2 Fd Regt 1 Sec 37 Lt A/A Bty Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	
6 FEB	ADVANCE to BARCE	1 Coy CHESHIRE 2 Pls A/T Coy 4th Bty 2/2 Fd Regt 1 Sec 37 Lt A/A Bty Mob Sec 2/2 Fd Amb	6 Aust Div Cav provided protection

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS SINCE TOBRUCH.

JAN. 23 :

2/7 Battalion moved by M.T. from battle H.Q. at TOBRUCH to cross roads 41294273 (Ref. TOBRUCH 1:100,000) to take over prisoners of war, "C" Coy. having proceeded on this duty the night before.

Some 25,000 prisoners were concentrated in a compound in one mass and no wire was available for partitioning off. In an adjacent compound was a large underground magazine that was also guarded by the Bn.

Two platoons of "B" Coy. were attached to 19 Inf. Bde. to take over prisoners captured by that Bde. on its advance to DERNA.

Every available man was used to feed and water the prisoners and it proved an exhausting task. The Bn. was on this duty 23-26 Jan., handing over to 2/2 Bn. at 1500 hrs. 26 Jan. On 27 Jan 41 a day was spent in cleaning up and some men had a swim in TOBRUCH harbour. A particularly heavy dust storm blew in the afternoon followed by rain at night.

The Bn. moved 43 miles by M.T. at 0700 hrs. 28 Jan. to AIN EL GAZALA for a rest near the sea and remained there until the morning of 30 Jan. On 30 Jan. Bn. moved 65 miles by M.T. to an area West of MARTROUBA to take part in the capture of DERNA, and one Coy. 2nd. Cheshires came under command.

On 31 Jan. Bn. moved by route march across country 14 miles to an assembly position at ELUET GIAB., arriving there at 1530 hrs. At that time orders were received to move forward to a position at Ruins Point 369 that would give a better start next day, a distance of $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Lunch was eaten and the Bn. moved at 1630 hrs.

The route to the new position on the farther side of the minefield necessitated a move North then West through the cleared portion of the field. The two moves being 14 miles and $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles a total of $20\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The Bn. arrived at dark and dug in.

At 2200 hrs. the L.O. brought orders to move to a new location at 156377 to cover a gap between 5 and 6 Bn.s. and to be in position at first light. This necessitated a move of $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles by compass over unsean country, rocky and traversed by wadis fortunately shallow.

n The Bn. moved at 0130 hrs. and was in position at 0400 hrs. All of the Bn. and Cheshire transport arriving before first light by which time the Bn. had dug in.

In 17 hours the Bn. marched across country 26 miles the last $5\frac{1}{2}$ by compass in the dark.

The Bn. was ordered to move forward on the afternoon of 1 Feb. 41 at 1500 Hrs. to an assembly position at 065375 ref. map. CHAULAN, a distance of 8 miles, and arrived there at dark. At 2000 hrs. a conference was held at 2/7 Bn. H.Q. by the Brigadier at which orders were issued for an attack on a defended position at ELUET NOEL 939456, ref. Map GIOVANNI BERTA, to take place the following day.

The Bn. moved at 0800 hrs. 2 Feb. on a compass bearing over hilly and stoney country traversed by deep valleys partially across the line of march. One Coy. Cheshires and two troops A/Tk. guns under command and 2/2 Fd. Regt. going in support. The Bn. reached its assembly position accurately at 1145 hrs. and the artillery commenced to register. The position appeared abandoned and a fighting patrol was ordered to investigate. The place proved empty and the Bn. marched in.

After a conference at Bde: H.Q. during which one of our planes, not expecting us to be in there, fired a burst at H.Q. The force was ordered to march to GIOVANNI BERTA. During the early stages ITALIAN planes flew over but missed the column, at that time rather badly jammed in a valley, and attacked B. Echelon which was moving and raising dust to the south.

The Bn; continued the march and took up a position facing East, about 2000 yds. to the East of GIOVANNI BERTA, at nightfall

On 3 Feb. orders were received to move to a position $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles West of EL GHERAB. The men by this time were footsore but started off on the 15 mile march involved determined to get there.

Early in the afternoon the vehicles of 2/2 Fd. Regt. were generously offered to lift the Bn. and did so after they had marched about 11 miles. Bn. went into bivouac for the night.

On 4 Feb. the Bn. moved to a position 6 Kilos West of EL FAIDA by M.M. and took up bivouac areas. The weather became extremely cold followed by a gale with hail and sleet. Conditions were most trying and uncomfortable.

On 6 Feb. at 1445 hrs. orders were received to move by M.T. to a position a few miles East of TECNIS. The Bn. moved at 1600 hrs. and arrived at the area after dark.

On 7 Feb. the Bn. was ready to move all day to a position South of BARCE but as the road had been cratered could not do so.

Another cold and wet night was experienced and the move commenced at 0800 hrs. on 8 Feb. A detour of about 11 miles had to be traversed but by this time it was a quagmire in parts and slippery in others. Motor trucks continually became bogged and had to be pushed back on to the track.

Most of the Bn. reached the barracks at BARCE by nightfall where quarters had been allotted and news was received of the collapse of the Italian Cyrenaica Army.

The remainder of the Bn. arrived during the night after an unenviable experience in mud and cold, a complete change from dust desert.

:iii;

MOVEMENT DURING THIS PERIOD.

TOBRUCH - AIN EL GAZALA	M.T.	43 miles.		28 Jan.
AIN EL GAZALA - MARTROUBA	"	65 "		30 Jan.
MARTROUBA - ELUET GIAB	Foot	14 "	} 1100 hrs.	31 Jan.
ELUET GIAB - RUINS 369	"	6½ "		
RUINS 369 - 156377	"	5½ "		Night of 31 Jan/1 Feb.
156377 - POINT 429 (065375)	"	8 "		1 Feb.
POINT 419 - ELUET NOEL	"	13 "		2 Feb.
ELUET NOEL - GIOVANNI BERTA	"	11 "		2 Feb.
GIOVANNI BERTA - LANDUDA	"	12 "		3 Feb. 1500.
LANDUDA - EL GHEBAB	m;t;	7½ "		3 Feb.
EL GHEBAB - EL FAIDA	M.T.	14 "		4 Feb.
EL FAIDA)- TECNIS	M.T.	47 "		6 Feb.
TECNIS - BARCE	M.T.	25 "		8/9 Feb.

*Spec 4 was on the
only 2/7/50*

To 17 Aust Inf Bde.

From 2/5 Bn.

REPORT ON ACTION OF 2/5 BN DURING THE ATTACK ON TOBRUCH.

(1) During night 20/21 Jan 41, in order to comply with the order of 17 Aust Inf Bde to adjust dispositions so that the Bn with B Coy 1 Cheshires under comd could with a minimum of delay carry out any role which might be allotted to it, the Bn less dets moved to an area south of BARDIA ROAD deployed in battle formation with a depth of two miles with the centre at bend in OLD BARDIA ROAD at 42554201. By 2330 hrs the movement was complete and all personnel were dug in to a minimum depth of 18". The dets consisted of :-

- (a) "C" Coy, which remained in position north of BARDIA ROAD at 42654224.
- (b) Pl "D" Coy, 1 Pl "B" Coy 1 Cheshires, and two dets L.M. Pl (2 Italian Mortars) all under command of Lieut A.C. BENNETT. This was called UEDDAN DET, and it was located in the spur of WADI UEDDAN at 42444244.

The task of these dets was to prevent enemy advancing east of WADI UEDDAN north of BARDIA ROAD - a front of 4 kilos. To facilitate this task the UEDDAN Det was to act in such a manner as would most effectively create the impression that we were holding the area north of the road in some strength. The comd appears to have done this with energy and imagination. A copy of his report is attached.

The main body had a hot breakfast at 0430 hrs and was ready to move at first light.

At 0545 hrs all of the Bn and att tps areas were shelled, mostly with 6" shells, and this continued all day as long as troops were outside the perimeter.

At 1315 hrs an order was received for the Bn and att ~~tps~~ tps less dets (a) and (b) to enter the perimeter at R77. The advance began at once. This movement was shelled continuously, but owing to a wide dispersion only two casualties (one died later) were received. The advance was made at a fast walk and with resolution by all ranks. The enemy arty which gave its attention to this move was considered with some certainty to be a 149 mm 4 gun bty.

The tps closed to pass the crossing over the A/Tk ditch and then again deployed. At this stage an order was received that the Bn and att tps less dets was to assemble in an area east of Road Junc at 41594256 and came under comd 19 Aust Inf Bde. C.O. reported to 19 Aust Inf Bde at 41504254 at 1530 hrs and was instructed to occupy posn across the WADI heads from incl WADI EL CHELEILA to WADI EL NEDURA. This posn was occupied by about 1800 hrs with "D" Coy less one Pl and "A" Coy fwd, with "B" Coy in reserve. On completion of occupation of this posn the comd reverted to 17 Aust Inf Bde. At 0630 hrs on 22 Jan in compliance with orders received from 17 Aust Inf Bde two fighting patrols of one Pl each were sent down WADI EL CHELEILA and WADI EL NEDURA. These patrols were to protect the flanks of a Coy of 2/6 Bn which proceeded via the high ground between the WADIS to attack enemy bty still in action in square 419430. No resistance was encountered by the patrols and only a few prisoners came out of the wadi. At about 0800 hrs authority was given by comd 17 Aust Inf Bde to fan out to the west, "B" Coy was despatched down to west of MARSА UMM ES SCIAUSC but found that this area had been cleared.

On afternoon 22 Jan an order was received from 17 Aust Inf Bde to concentrate for rest, bathing, and collection of enemy salvage. Dets "A" and "B" rejoined Bn and "B" Coy 1 Cheshires rejoined their Bn. 23 Jan was occupied in these activities.

24 Jan 40

R. King Lt Col
Comd 2/5 Bn

REPORT ON DEMONSTRATION PARTY 17 PL 2/5 BN, 1 PL CHESHIRE M.G. BN AND

MORTAR DET 2/5 BN.

On afternoon of 20 Jan I arranged the programme for the next morning as on the attached sketch. At 0530 hrs 21 Jan 41 we started, the three Brens, four Vickers and rifles all firing. The two Italian mortars started at 0540 when the arty began. The A/T R and 2" Mortar waited until it was light at 0630 hrs. Unfortunately the truck with the fireworks broke down and we were unable to get them up in time. The enemy replied with enthusiasm and shelled us with guns and mortars until 0800 hrs when their fire gradually declined. Some revolver amm was used. There were no casualties of any description.

Capt COTTER from Div H.Q., who had arrived the night before to fix the fireworks, left about 0900 hrs. During the afternoon the enemy shelled the hill from which we had "shot up" an M.G. Post earlier in the week.

The night of 21/22 Jan was quiet, our fixed lines firing odd bursts and our patrols seeing no sign of the enemy between us and the sea. 22 Jan was quiet, patrols reporting no movement to the east of the enemy positions. We received orders to rejoin our Bn that afternoon.

The Cheshire Pl under 2nd Lieut WHEELER did a great job, and assisted us to bring up food and water, also carting our gear when our Pl truck broke down.

The two men from the Mortar Pl did well, firing 95 rounds into the enemy posns. All the ~~men~~ men were in great spirits and all through the show worked hard and cheerfully.

Ammunition expended :-

.303 S.A.A.	14000	(Cheshires)
	4200	(17 Pl 2/5 Bn)
3" Mortar	95	
2" Mortar	18	
A/T R	26	

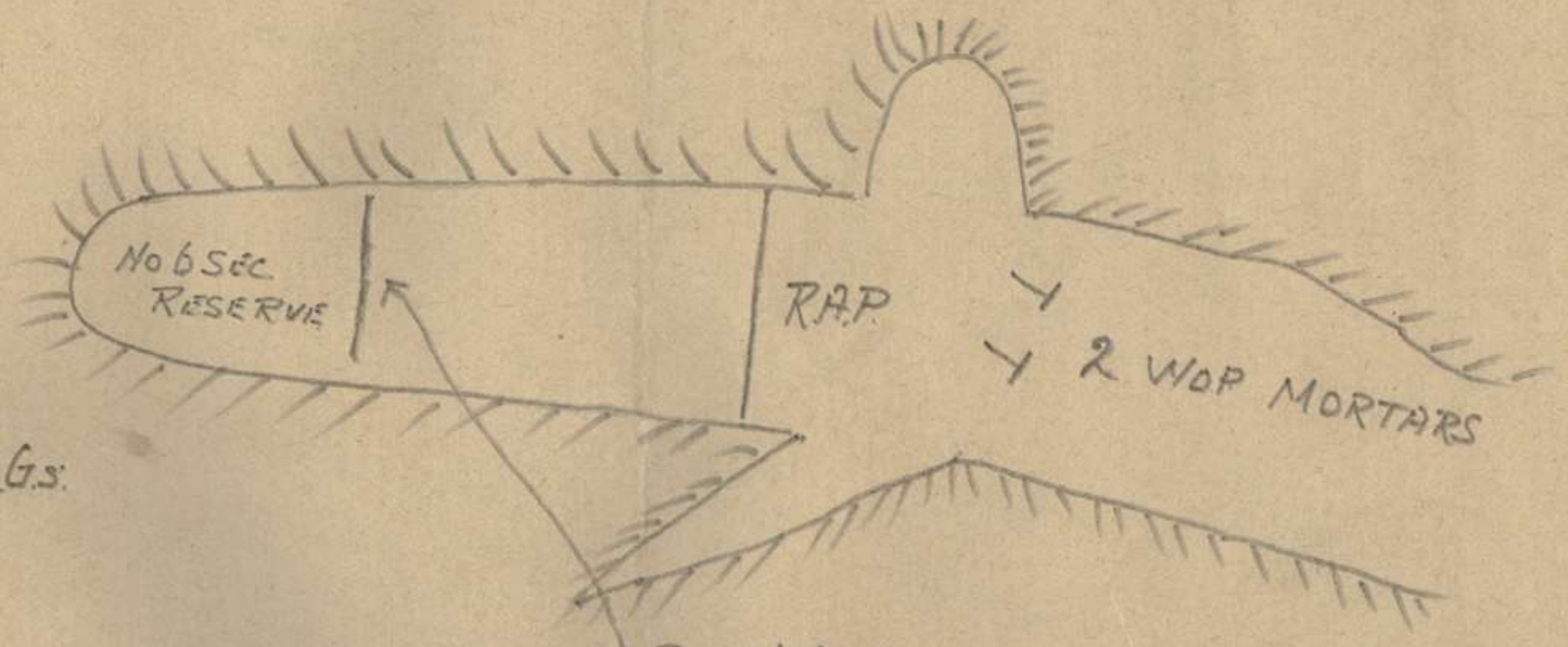
A small amount of revolver and automatic amm was also used.

ac Bennett
Lieut.
O.C. Det.

X X X ALT POSN.

No 5 Sec

1 Sec M.G



1 Sec. M.G.s.

PL H.Q.
SIGS
STRETCHER BEARERS

4 Sec 17 Pl
A/T.K. Rifle

ALT. POSN.

INT. SEC 2/5 BN.
24 JAN. 41

Headquarters,
2/6 Aust Inf Bn;
25 Jan 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde.,

2/6 AUST INF BN - PARTICIPATION IN THE BATTLE OF "TOBRUCH".

After our success at BARDIA, we had a few days rest; but soon were again on the move Westward, where we took up a reserve position some 36 kilos from TOBRUCH; the line being occupied by 19 and 16 Bdes.

On 15 Jan, 17 Bde relieved 19 Bde - with 2/6 Bn as reserve Bn.

Whilst in reserve, we were able to get in some valuable training and practice in rapid moves, attacking areas and Wadis, by day and by night. Unpleasant sand-storms made the stay in this area anything but ~~pleasant~~ enjoyable. Recces of all areas proceeded and the Unit was ready for any role allotted.

On 19 Jan, G.O. received definite instructions as to our role.

We came under command of 16 Bde as from 1600 hrs 20 Jan.

The move to a Bn Bivouac Area, in proximity of 16 Bde Assembly Area, was facilitated by the provision of M.T. by ~~17~~ Bde. The Bn arrived, in good order, and settled down until 0130 hrs on morning of 21 Jan.

Feeding, and final arrangements, were completed; and at 0300 hrs 2/6 Bn moved to its Assembly Area.

Under command were - a Tp "P" Bty R.H.A.; a Pl 2 Cheshire Regt.; and with the leading Coys - 2 F.O.Os from 2/2 Fd Regt with, at all times, a Tp at call.

Assembly Area was reached at 0545 hrs; F.U.P. at 0600 hrs, and the move forward to S.L., in perfect order, then proceeded.

As we followed 2/2 Bn forward, some congestion was apparent as the narrow S.L. necessitated by the lanes and entrance forced by 2/1 Bn over enemy Tank-ditch and Mines, had to cater for all troops of 16 Bde and attachments, Tanks, A/Tk Guns, M.Gs, etc.

Keeping in touch with the rear of the 2/2 Bn, 2/6 Bn crossed the S.L. at 0710 hrs - 15 minutes behind schedule. **By this time enemy shelling had increased and, going through the gap, our forces were fortunate not to incur casualties.**

At this point we lost an A/Tk Porté, with 6 men wounded, the result of a booby-trap, of which there were many.

Once through the wire, we were able to speed up our advance as the 2/2 Bn had gone North, whilst we cleared their elements and moved East. Shelling had caused bad visibility and checking of direction was aided by the rising sun. As the atmosphere cleared, the picture of the Bn moving forward in correct battle order was impressive. Odd prisoners were captured from small Posts, but no real resistance was met until Post 62 was reached. It was apparent that 2/1 Bn, along the perimeter to our right, had been successful and that 2/2 Bn were also pushing well forward on our left.

During the operation to date the formation was 2 Coys fwd - "A" right, "B" left, "C" and "D" following 500x behind in reserve; and echeloned out to broaden our line of advance. M.G. Pl with "C" Coy, Tp A/Tk on left flank, our own improvised A/Tk Pl (now

reduced to 2 guns) on right flank.

At Road Junction - South of Post 62 - we changed our direction to enable our axis of advance to move direct to our objective in a N.E. direction with Road as inter-Coy boundary.

Post 62 offered some resistance, and, after some bombing, Bren fire, and a few shells from an "I" Tank, the garrison still resisted, being in defiladed concrete emplacements. Leaving a party to deal with this Post the advance continued. With the use of a quantity of crude oil and kerosene, which was handy, the Pioneer Pl Comdr (Lt.F.D.Clarke) brought about a change of mind in the Post Comdr's ideas, and the garrison was captured. This resistance was one of the few gallant actions on the part of the enemy during the battle; the Captain Commanding the Post having told his men they would fight to the end and die at their posts. Eleven of the enemy in this garrison were killed in the action, before flame brought them out of their sheltered positions - One Captain and 34 men being captured.

The advance to the BARDIA Road continued without event but severe shelling from coastal area necessitated a halt for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour along line of BARDIA Road at about 1000 hrs. Efforts by F.O.O. to silence enemy Btys evidently had its effect and the Bn was enabled to move forward and reach its objective, North of BARDIA Road by 1100 hrs.

After recce, 3 Coys were disposed forward, "D" "A" and "B" from right to left, and 1 Coy ("C") in reserve.

In order to cover Wadis and enemy Bty areas, Mortars and Brens were disposed but, acting on instructions, no exploitation was made down Wadis.

During afternoon, 21 Jan, 2/6 Bn reverted to command 17 Bde.

At Bde conference, at 1945 hrs, orders for 2/6 Bn front to be taken over by 2/7 Bn at 0130 hrs 22 Jan were notified - 2/6 Bn becoming Divisional reserve and to move to sq. 420422

This move was effected.

At 0245 hrs L.O. reported with orders to effect 2/6 Bn (less "C" Coy on detached role referred to later) were to come under command 19 Bde and move to SIDI MAHMUD and be in position before 0900 hrs, with C.O. to report 19 Bde H.Q. also before 0900 hrs.

At 0500 hrs a meal was supplied by Coys and Bn moved at 0615 hrs.

Having covered a distance of fully 17 miles on 21 Jan, and two moves before daylight on 22nd, the spirit of the troops was commendable as they moved off - they realised there was a job to be done and the efficient handling of Coy and Pl Comdrs was most effective.

C.O. attended conference at 19 Bde H.Q. at 0830 hrs with other Unit Comdrs of that Bde. The Bn was then arriving at SIDI MAHMUD. Orders to remain in that area, with a possible role of following up 2/8 Bn later, were received.

C.O. rejoined Bn and at 0945 hrs 19 Bde L.O. instructed him to move forward and follow 2/8 Bn towards its objective. Move commenced at 1015 hrs. By 1215 hrs 2/6 Bn moving along foot of escarpment through a heavy sand-storm had reached line of road ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Fort PILASTRINO - Fort AIRENTE at 40764308.

A forward recce party of Lt A.R. Benns and the I Sgt had failed to contact 2/8 Bn. After 10 minutes C.O. contacted an Officer of 2/8 Bn and learned they ~~XXXXXX~~ were just completing their recce and had not yet moved forward. The 2/6 Bn were halted whilst 2/8 Bn moved forward, until 1315 hrs. C.O. informed C.O. 2/8 Bn that 2/6 Bn would follow and be available to support and assist as required. Move continued forward until reaching DERNA Road at 1400 hrs. As 2/8 Bn had met no resistance and were combing WADIS, 2/6 Bn were halted and took up defensive position North of DERNA Road, vicinity unoccupied stronghold at 40854344; C.O. and I.O. moved forward and reported location to 2/8 Bn.

At 1500 hrs Div. L.O. arrived and gave information of fall of TOBRUCH and defensive position to be taken up by 2/6 Bn South of DERNA Road across escarpment to Fort PILASTRINO. This necessitated a move back over the route traversed. Having completed a further 16 miles on 22 Jan in heavy going, encountered a severe sand-storm, and failing to get any role which led to a bit of excitement, which tends to make troops forget fatigue, the troops were very weary and foot-sore. However the position was taken up and a reasonable rest was experienced until "stand-to" at 0530 hrs 23 Jan.

During the morning of 23 Jan "B" Coy was employed in clearing out the buildings and dug-outs of 22 Italian Corps, to be used as 6 Armt Div H.Q. and the Bn was transferred back to area WADI CHETEITA where it is enjoying the facilities of bathing in the Mediteranian.

The operations of "C" Coy (Capt. J.G. Rowan) are attached and submitted as APPENDIX "A".

Although the force under Capt. Rowan achieved their object without a scrap, the operation reflects great credit on the excellent handling by this Officer.

Again I have pleasure in reporting on the excellent behaviour of all ranks of the Bn during the operation.

Although not called on for anything to test them out as compared with their strenuous fighting at BARDIA, their job was done efficiently and well.

Troops under command assisted in every way possible and I cannot speak too highly of their co-operation.

My Q.M., T.O., and "B" echelon staff worked untiringly to assure the welfare of the troops.

Whilst under command of 16 and 19 Bdes, lack of communication was the main worry.

I respectfully submit that very careful consideration is required in the use of an attached Bn as reserve in future operations.

The considerable ground we were forced to cover on 22 Jan, after a strenuous preceding day and little opportunity for rest, may have seriously prejudiced the fighting quality of less hardy troops. Had we been retained as reserve at our original position at SIDI MAHMUD and used on any portion of the front as required, the fighting efficiency of the troops may have been greater.

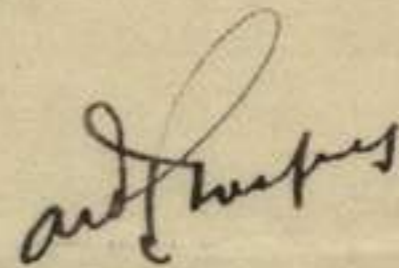
In no way do I question the employment of my Bn - the dispositions were evidently required by the Commander's plan - but I feel the situation of a Bn under command of a Bde other than its own requires careful thought in order to be able to produce that Bn in as fresh a condition as possible for any task allotted.

(4)

During the periods under command of 16 and 19 Bdes, all orders as received were carried out and all timings observed.

I received every consideration from their Commanders and Staff and trust that this Bn carried out its work to their satisfaction.

List of Casualties, Captured Prisoners, and War Stores is attached.



Lieut.-Col.,
Commanding 2/6 Aust Inf Bn.

APPENDIX "A"

ACTIVITIES OF "C" COY AS A DETACHED FORCE : 2/6 AUST INF BN :

2300 hrs 21 Jan 41 - Conference of Pl Comdrs and supporting arms
Instructions for the move 22nd.

0400 hrs 22nd. - Reveille.

0500 hrs - All sub-units report ready to move.

0515 hrs - Coy moved off. Did not make contact with
guides from 2/5 Bn, but made contact with the Pl of that Unit which
provided a patrol on the right flank. Moved to S.L. making contact
with O.C. of Coy of 2/5 Bn.

Crossed the S.L. at 0630 hrs. Moved forward about 2500x,
halted the Coy and went forward with the F.O.O. and made a recce
from 68 ring contour in sq. 418428. Sent runner back for Pl Comdrs
and Comdrs of M.M.G. Pl; Mortar Pl; and Carriers.

Whilst making a recce with F.O.O. noticed a white flag in the
vicinity of the enemy Bty position, and considerable movement of tps.
They were standing about in groups and appeared to have surrendered.

Sent message by F.O.O. to Bty - to be repeated to NOWA - at
0800 hrs.

Pl Comdrs joined Coy Comdr at point 74 in sq. 418428.

Plan of attack prepared. Instructions issued that NO firing
of supporting arms unless Coy fired on by enemy.

Attack developed and the Italians started to come out in a column
with their hands up.

Further message was sent by F.O.O. - repeated NOWA - that enemy
Post had surrendered. This was sent at 0900 hrs. Pls collected
prisoners from Wadis in vicinity of Shore Bty. Estimated number
collected is 50 Officers; 400 O.Rs; also 6-3.7 Guns and 4-6" Naval
Guns.

Moved back on to top of escarpment with prisoners and issued
instructions for move of Coy to rejoin Unit.

Was met by B.I.O. and given further instructions for subsequent
role. Comb Wadis up as far as Marsa Umm es Sciaù se between
escarpment and beach then to rejoin Unit at SIDI MAHMUD sq. 414426.

Made contact with Pl of 2/11 Bn in area of sq. 417431 and learned
that Wadis had been combed by that Unit, and moved off to Unit Area.

Arrived in that vicinity at 1745 hrs, and at 1815 hrs received
a message by D.R. from C.O. to remain in present location for the
night.

Prisoners had been sent back, under escort, at 1300 hrs.

On the completion of the role several men had dropped out and an
N.C.O. and 2 men were detailed to collect stragglers - of which there
were 4. They made contact with the 2/5 Bn who cared for them over-
night. This party rejoined Coy at 0800 hrs on 23rd.

(sgt) *J. R. Rowan*
Captain.,
O.C. "C" Coy, 2/6 Aust Inf Bn.

A P P E N D I X

" B "

LIST OF PRISONERS OF WAR AND ARMS CAPTURED BY
2/6 AUST. INF. BN.
21 -22 - 23 Jan. 41.

PRISONERS OF WAR (Approx.)

80 between entry into perimeter and Post 62
34 O.R.s } Post 62
 I Captain }
80 Post 64
86 Wadi Delia

281 Total captured on 21 Jan.

50 Officers) From arty posn. at MERSA CHETEITA
400 O.R.s) by " C " Coy.

731

STRAGGLERS.

Prisoners estimated at 1500 were placed under escort by 2/6 Bn. during the advance North on afternoon of 22 Jan. Although without escort they may have originally been captured by 2/8 Bn.

GRAND TOTAL.

731 definitely captured.
1500 surrendered and taken under escort.

2231

ENEMY KILLED.

11 at Post 62
12 at Wadi Delia
23

ENEMY ARMS CAPTURED.

6 3.7 guns) at Mersa Cheteita.
4 6" naval guns }
 Large amounts S.A.A. and artillery ammunition.
3 M.M.G.s }
1 A/Tk gun) at Post 62
3 M.M.G.s) at Wadi Delia.

2/7 BN.

24 JAN. 41.

BATTLE REPORT.

At 0537 hrs. 21 Jan. 40 2/7 Bn. Adv. H.Q. moved forward from point 42624174 to the assembly area which was being desultorily shelled. On arrival at the assembly area visibility was reduced to 50 yds. by ground fog and dust.

Bn. formation was -

"B", Adv. B.H.Q., "A", "C", "D", Bn. H.Q. (rear).

As I. Tanks could not be seen owing to bad visibility at R. 65, Lt. Col. Walker decided at 0745 hrs. to move with an advance guard to ascertain the situation. This move was made on a compass bearing of 360° and the Bn. reached POST R.65 accurately just as rear of 2/6 Bn. passed. This was according to plan.

"B" Coy. crossed the wire and trap at 0825 hrs. one booby trap being encountered and rendered harmless, the work done by the patrols the night before deserving mention.

"B" Coy. moved forward in rear of 2/6 Bn. along the wire perimeter.

Enemy shellfire at this stage was sporadic. At 0930 hrs. fwd. Coys., "B" with "A" on left, were passing point 41964204 moving forward on to their objective to relieve 2/1 Bn.

At 1020 hrs. adv. H.Q. was established at POST R.75, "B" and "A" Coys. continuing to move to POSTS 76 and 79.

2 enemy guns were firing very close to Bn. H.Q. at this period, and I.O. made an unsuccessful recce. to ascertain their position.

"B" Coy. relieved 2/1 Bn. at and including POSTS 81 - 85.

Lt. Col. Walker having gone forward with Major Power, 2nd Cheshires to observe the situation, Major Marshall ordered that rear Bn. H.Q. be moved up to POST 75.

At 1135 hrs. a message was sent to Bde. by Lt. Col. Walker that 2/7 Bn. was on its limit of exploitation North of BARDIA Rd. in accordance with O.O.

"A" Coy. reported 250 prisoners taken with light resistance at Z.78.

At 1338 hrs. Bn. H.Q. moved to the cross-roads in square 422422.

Enemy shelling at 1545 hrs. caused one casualty who was cleared to R.A.P. Also during the afternoon 2 enemy batteries shelled Bn. H.Q. and "B" Coy.

Lt. Carstairs and 7 Other Ranks were wounded during this shelling.

At 1845 hrs. Lt. Col. Walker proceeded to a conference at Bde. H.Q.

At 2130 hrs. C.O. issued orders to "C" Coy. to relieve 2/6 Bn. commencing at 0130 hrs. The relief was completed at 0245 hrs., "C" Coy. H.Q. being established at 42134244.

"B" Coy. were ordered to take over the area held by "B" and "A" Coys. at first light, "A" and "C" Coys. to clear Posts in the ZEITUN Area and areas west of the wire to track in square 419425 and between BARDIA Rd. and Coast.

"A" Coy. reported position POST TRIG. 94 at 0930 hrs. and the intention to move 1 Platoon forward with 2 Plns. in reserve at Rd. junction 42684232.

"C" Coy. reported that they had reached Point 42184277 and were moving West to Wadi in square 420427. Prisoners 120. The remaining 2 posts were cleared by "A" Coy. and the operation was completed.

Capt. Savige captured the Area Commander in POST 94 and as it was across 300 ft. deep wadi to the next, said "Mano in alto the b--", and pointed to the next POSTS. The commander rang and they came in to be taken prisoner.

1620 hrs. B.H.Q. moved forward to POST Z.93. Coys. taking up positions as ordered. This completed the operation.

CASUALTIES : Killed Nil.

Wounded. 1 Officer (Lt. Carstairs)

8 Other ranks.

W. G. Wacarr Lt. Col.

CMDG. 2/7 BN.

2/5 BATTALION : A.I.F.

16 FEB 1941

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS : 9 JAN 41 - 12 FEB 41.

HQ 2/5 BN
IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
NO. 11/0/1

On 9 Jan 41, after three or four days rest in the BARDIA area, 2/5 Bn left in M/T for posn some 14 miles in rear of TOBRUCH defences, 437420 ref. map GAMBUT 1/100,000.

Until 15 Jan 41 the Bn remained in that area without incident, save that 1 Pl "C" Coy which was guarding aerodrome EL ADEM was shelled on night 12/13 Jan. No damage was done. The remaining two platoons of "C" Coy were on guard duty at water points. Advantage was taken of the proximity of the sea, and swimming parades were frequent. Wadis adjacent to area were combed at intervals to prevent any Italians, who had escaped from BARDIA, reaching TOBRUCH. Five were captured.

On night 15 Jan 41 the Bn relieved 2/4 Bn in the areas of Wadis BELGASSEN, UEDDAN, GEREULA 4267, 4236 ref. map TOBRUCH Composite 1/100,000.

Until 20 Jan 41 the Bn remained in that area, from where it carried out night patrols in direction of ENEMY wire, behind which much activity was indicated. Attached to 2/5 Bn was "B" Coy 1 CHESHIREs, under Major COOK-HURLE.

During these days the Bn received its share of shelling and suffered three casualties.

On 16 Jan 41 Lieut. Col. R. KING, G.S.O.(II) Div H.Q. took over command of the Bn.

On evening of 19 Jan 41, Lieut J.S. McLEAN and 48 O.R's arrived as reinforcements.

On the evening of 20 Jan the Bn, less one detachment, moved to assembly point 4285, 4197 ref map TOBRUCH 1/100,000, where it took up posn as reserve Bn, and where it remained until 1350 hrs on 21 Jan 41. During the whole of the period, from 0545 hrs on 21 Jan onwards, the Bn was shelled but without loss. TOBRUCH, meanwhile, had fallen, and 2/5 Bn's only part in the attendant proceedings was to move at 1350 hrs under command 19 Aust Inf Bde to vicinity 4159, 4256 ref. map TOBRUCH Defences (Red Overprint 12 Jan) 1/50,000, some seven miles inside wire. During the move two casualties, one fatal, were inflicted by shell fire, which ceased after Bn passed through wire.

Later the Bn moved and took up a posn across wadi heads, from wadi EL CHELEILA to wadi EL NEDURA on the left flank of 19 Aust Inf Bde. The occupation was completed at 1900 hrs when the Bn reverted to 17 Bde control.

During the early hours of the attack on TOBRUCH, a detachment, comprising one rifle platoon, two detachments of mortars with two Italian mortars and one platoon of "B" Coy 1 CHESHIREs, all under command of Lieut A.C. BENNETT of 2/5 Bn, made a demonstration in wadi UEDDAN 4244, 4244 ref map TOBRUCH 1/50,000, with the intention of drawing attention to themselves and diverting it from the main attack. The demonstration was partially successful at least, for considerable ENEMY reply resulted.

Until 26 Jan 41 the Bn spent a quiet period of salvaging - official and unofficial - in and adjacent to this area, and on 26 Jan the Bn moved forward along DERNA ROAD. At 1730 hrs Bn stopped and bivouaced for the night and on the 27th resumed its journey to AIN EL GAZALA, where for a further period it browsed.

On 29 Jan the Bn moved to posn 12 miles S.W. of DERNA where again it relieved 2/4 Bn on Wadi DERNA. Bn H.Q. was situated at 253, 402 MARTUBA 1/100,000. The fwd Coys in this posn were under constant shell and M.G. fire.

The fwd Coys, "A" and "C", on the night of 30 Jan moved onto the road DERNA to GIOVANNI BERTA, to protect a crossing, if way could be found by the Bde. During the afternoon of 31 Jan the other two rifle coys with Pioneer Pl crossed the road and joined the other

(continued).

crossed the wadi and joined up with "A" and "C" Coys. transport so the whole were without vehicles.

No road had been found for

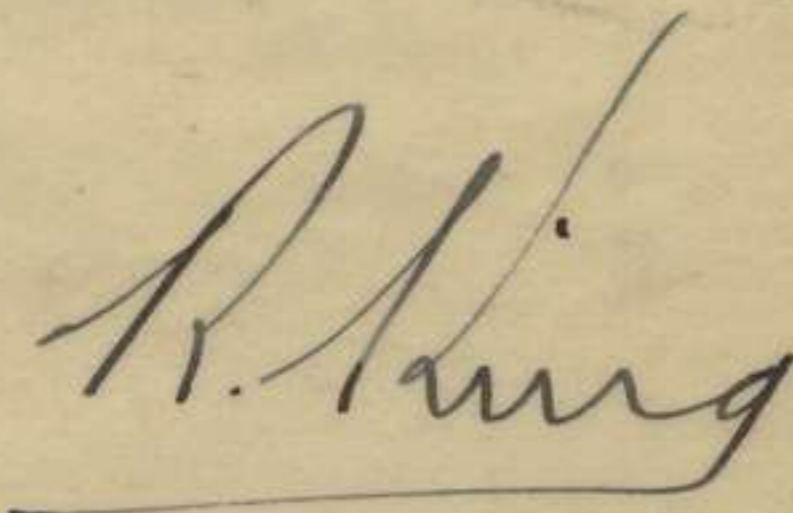
This body advanced some 12 kilos West until at dusk it halted, because of ENEMY fire in front. This fire was not directed at 2/5 Bn and Lt.Col KING decided to launch a dawn attack on the rear of the ENEMY posn. This decision had to be abandoned because of subsequent orders which he received. The night of 31 Jan was unpleasantly cold. The Bn was situated at 140, 440 ref map GIOVANNI BERTA 1/100,000.

On 2 Feb ~~after an inactive 1st~~ the Bn moved back to join up with its H.Q. Coy and Transport, and on 3 Feb moved to ZAUJET TERT 807, 555 GIOVANNI BERTA 1/100,000. On 4 Feb Bn moved to 617, 540 CIRENE 1/100,000, South of CIRENE where it took up a defensive posn.

On 8 Feb "B" and "D" Coys moved to CHEHA but before arrival were diverted to BARGE where they arrived at 1800 hrs on 9 Feb 41, after a slow trip due to road blocks and bad weather. H.Q. Coy arrived on 10 Feb.

"A" and "C" Coys have moved into and will remain at CIRENE for the present.

The Coys at BARGE are billeted in and are cleaning part of the barracks south of the town.



Lieut.Col.
Commanding 2/5 Bn A.I.F.

Subject :- TANK HUNTING PATROL.REPORT BY O.C. (LIEUT F.D.H. WRAY) SPECIAL PARTY.

Reference OP. INST. No 21 5 Mar 41.

1. ENEMY were not identified.
2. Fwd ENEMY troops were observed at XB 0366, 8 Mar at 1500 hrs. Party consisted of two A.F.V's, two or three small tanks or motor cycle combinations, and one large truck.
3. The above party observed towards EL AGHEILA for 20 minutes, and then withdrew to the north, apparently making for the road. Dead ground prevented further observation. During this time the special party was approx. 4 to 5 kilos from the enemy and could not advance to take action as the country between was absolutely flat, with no cover.

Ref. 1 (a) There was no identification by action.

- (b) Identification by sight was not possible as the only troops observed were too far away to see clearly, and even the vehicles could not be distinguished except for the fact that they were A.F.V's, but it could not be positively stated whether they were tanks and A/C's.
- (c) Both tanks and A/C's move off the road. Tracks indicate that the road is used to about Kilo 14, and that the vehicles then move into the open ground to the south.
- (d) Special party operated approx. 4 - 5 kilos ahead of CAGA patrol, and observed movement not visible to patrol. During the day 8 Mar 41 large parties of camels and cattle crossed the area about North South Grid XBO. I feel quite sure that A.F.V's approached point already mentioned in the midst of the camels. Men were observed all day in the area, in parties of two and three, and it is also thought that there were quite a few men moving in with the camels. Of course, it is very difficult to be certain with binoculars at 4 or five miles. One man was observing CAGA patrol from high ground on a bearing of 168° from 9 Kilo stone. CAGA was advised.

Running EAST and WEST on the north side of the road, there is a double feature not clearly indicated on the maps. Near the road (parallel) there is a ridge about 80' high, which extends definitely as far as 14 Kilo and probably further. North of this ridge again is another ridge backed by sandhills, which runs parallel with the coast. There is good cover for vehicles in the valley formed by the ridges; but enemy recce from the air seems to be very thorough. Enemy patrols fly over the high ground between 0700 hrs and 0800 hrs, 1200 and 1300, and 1600 and 1700 hrs. All E.A. seem to return towards one point, which gives them a course from (X)B0768 of 280°. There does not appear to be any enemy forward movement by night.

(Sgd) F.D.H. Wray
Lieut.

Note :- Patrol acted more cautiously on 8 Mar, because of a report from CAGA of an armoured force, our own, moving West, and then swinging North near the border. It was expected that the force would return through the main road area, so I did not proceed with the mining of the road.

2/7 B.N. Near Down

The following recce. tasks require your urgent attention please in the order of priority as set out but, if possible, to be done concurrently.

1. Select posn. for an outpost line fwd of present F.D.L.s but not further west than grid 4. Flanks to be protected by marshes. Imperative that area selected provides O.P.s for arty covered by inf. dispositions. Suggest recce by Capt. Marshall with an arty offr. in carriers armed both Bren and ATK.

Advise KDG of task and area of operation of party.

Report (a) location and extent of front selected (b) Description of front.

(c) est. of the reqd to hold it with what sup. fire reqd.

Object of outpost line To protect both O.P.s and guns moved into a fwd. posn from which they can engage any adv. of enemy further west than is now possible.

2. Recce extent and nature of marsh
from (X) B 4872 north then west then
south to B. ES SUERA.

Recce any tracks through this marsh
Est width of marsh as seen from
each of the three ARGUB's east of
marsh.

Report on this area as ATR obstacle

3. Recce extent and nature of marsh
from B es SUERA - el BARACHIM -
X-tracks (X) B 4370 - (X) B 4872
Report as in 2. above

Please treat each task as very
urgent and submit reports with
sketch in each case to this
H.Q.

1342 hrs

1 Mar. 41.

Brookley

E.A.B.

H.Q. 2/5 Bn A.I.F.
9 Mar 41.



B.M.
17 Aust Inf Bde.

RE DELIVERY OF MESSAGE TO "INUD".


Reference your message of 7 Mar 41 to INUD regarding Lieut WRAY's patrol.

I have to report that the message was received at about 1830 hrs on 7th with other letters from SEAR. These were opened, as is customary, by the Orderly Room Sgt.

It was immediately noticed that the message was to INUD, and Capt. DUFFY rang to inform them of the contents. The Orderly Room Sgt. a few minutes later rang INUD, gave them the order verbatim, and had the message repeated to ensure accuracy. This was done to save time.

It was intended to have the instruction from the Bde Major sent to INUD by signals immediately; but, due to an oversight, this was not done. The message has since been forwarded.

Capt. DUFFY was initially at fault in that he took the package of letters from the D/R instead of having them delivered to signals.

 Capt.
Adjutant,
for Lieut.Col.
Commanding 2/5 Bn A.I.F.
(in emergency).

Book No.....

5

SR

Page

H

132522

Register Serial No.	To	Time of Receipt	Signature
500-523	24 x ENID.	1140	<i>[Signature]</i>
8	SEAR Q446		
9	SEAR 0808	1335	<i>[Signature]</i>
10	SEAR A41.		
554-555.	2 x ENGA.	1800	<i>[Signature]</i>
556-565.	10 x CEHA.	1900	<i>[Signature]</i>

557

1540

Cpl Smith

II 135253

IN THE FIELD
8. MAR '41

M/R Brock

B. M.

17 Aust Inf Bde.

REPORT ON DESPATCH FOR INVD.

Attached is a report on the circumstances surrounding the Despatch for INVD.

In view of the fact that a special D.R. was not ordered the despatch was held for the next "normal run" which involved a delay in the Signal Office of 2 hrs 25 minutes.

The package was not marked with a special degree of "priority" and the writer understands that Cpl Smith had it marked myself in an endeavour to hasten delivery from C&HA.

SHEET 2.

8-MAR '11

In view of the circumstances surrounding this matter may the writer submit that this despatch warranted special priority which would have reduced the delay considerably.

As a further suggestion the contents would have been expedited if sent by line or W.P.

Frank Cox
Capt
of the Red Ship

NOTE:- Would you kindly arrange for the D/R. Slip to be returned to the writer

Cox

8. MAR '41

SIGNAL CORPS REPORT:

The despatch in question was delivered at Signal Office at approximately 1530 hrs on 7 Mar '41 by Cpl Smith.

Cpl Smith indicated that he wanted the despatch to get there as early as possible.

He was informed that it would go on the next D.R.S. which was timed to leave at 1730 hrs.

Cpl Smith asked that the despatch be marked urgent. This was done.

No suggestion was made that the despatch be sent by Special D.R. and it was numbered 557 and left for CEHA at 1755 hrs.

The D.R. by baton called at ENGA just then proceeded to CEHA and the despatch was signed for at 1900 hrs by J. Duffy of CEHA.

W. Browne

Ref Maps : AGEDABIA
EL AGHEILA
MARADA 1:500,000
SIRTE

S E C R E T.
Copy No. 19
8 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No. 34.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 8 Mar 41.

Enemy Air Activity.

Nil reported over area up to 1200 hrs 8 Mar.
Correction - 1045 hrs 7 Mar A/C damaged by
air action in AGHEILA area NOT Mn GIOFER area as reported
yesterday.


Enemy Ground Activity.

KDGs patrol now reports that new tank tracks
were definitely identified on ridge at (X)B0165 after enemy
retreat yesterday.

No information yet received from special
patrol from 2/5 Bn.

Air Reports. Tac/R 0700 hrs 8 Mar reports no change
except a number of armoured cars observed among 300-400 MT
seen along the coast in vicinity of the border. SA, AA fire
from turrets. Little movement on coast rd. Nothing to
report S.W. of marsh.

CONCLUSION : From air report it would appear that the
enemy is continuing to consolidate his position from coast
to marsh near border.


Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

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GAV/JWB

S. E C R E T

S/130/G.

Headquarters,
6 Aust Div.

8 Mar, 41.

3 Armd Bde

RELIEF of 17 AUST INF BDE.

You will please arrange that from 2000 hrs 9 Mar until 0700 hrs 10 Mar, i.e. during the period of relief of 17 Aust Inf Bde by 20 Aust Inf Bde the front of 17 Aust Inf Bde is covered by protection dets of units of your command.

C. Avery

Colonel.
GS 6 Aust Div.

Copies to:-

17 Aust Inf Bde —
File
War Diary

B

Ref Maps : AGEDABIA
EL AGHEILA
MARADA
SIRTE

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Copy No. 19

7 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No. 33.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 7 Mar 41.

Enemy Air Activity.

1045 hrs 6 Mar A Sqn patrol KDGs/dive bombed and machine gunned area MN GIOFER; slight damage one armd car, no casualties.

1625 hrs 2 EA (Mellio) machine gunned area (X) B 5676 one staff car, but no casualties, also attacked area B of SUERA.

1710 one EA, possibly S79, flew slowly over HQ 3 Armd Bde from east to west at 4000 ft and past over 17 Bde HQ flying west, no hostile action.

Enemy Ground Activity.

KDGs reported 1050 hrs 5 enemy tanks moving east 5 miles west of AGHEILA.

1100 hrs 5 enemy tanks stationary on ridge at (X)B0165 at too great distance for identification.

1130 hrs 4 enemy A/Cs, one fd gun moving east along rd at (X)B 0667. When engaged by 16 Aust A Tk Coy at 800 yds they withdrew rapidly westwards under cover of smoke, no casualties.

1145 hrs tanks on ridge moving east along rd.
1313 hrs enemy tanks previously reported stationary at (X)B0165 moved off in westerly direction.

Patrol reports N.M.S. in area after 1313 hrs.

Air Reports. Tac/R 0900 hrs reports 300 - 400 MT in gps of 4 - 5, digging in sand dunes between marsh and sea at frontier.

1 armd car just west AGHEILA. Nothing observed south and east of marsh on frontier to MT GIOFER and ground to west, which is flat and barren.

Thermos Bombs. 2/5 Bn report thermos bombs located 400 yds east of MARSALA BREGA turn off 10 yds north of rd.

Enemy Air Tactics. A close observation of action by EA indicated the following.

(a) After the defeat of enemy tps escaping from BENGHASI the front was open. German aid by aircraft appeared to undertake a role to stop or impede any further advance. Between 15 - 25 Feb (approx) he attacked in force at low levels. A number of attacks were in strengths up to 25 machines and between 18 - 24 Feb increased in intensity and strength.

(b) From about 26 Feb these tactics changed to chiefly recce with some 4 engined bombers in use. Bombers were used principally, but little aggressive action was undertaken. He followed the placing of our additional tps with some accuracy. About every 3-4 days some fighters and medium bombers attacked ground tps. It would appear that the bulk of his machines then protected the enemy force on its Southward move.

(c) During the last 5/6 days enemy action has decreased considerably in number and attack. The chief work by odd planes is recce. It would appear that German machines are either being withdrawn or used over wider fields. The former appears to be more likely.

(d) An odd Italian plane or two have been seen occasionally. Thermos flask bombs were dropped overnight, which indicates the possibility of more Italian planes and less German as deduced in (c).

(e) The interesting point of distance between striking bullets from EA at speeds travelled has engaged attention. A check gave the striking distance of bullets on flat ground at regular 9 foot intervals.

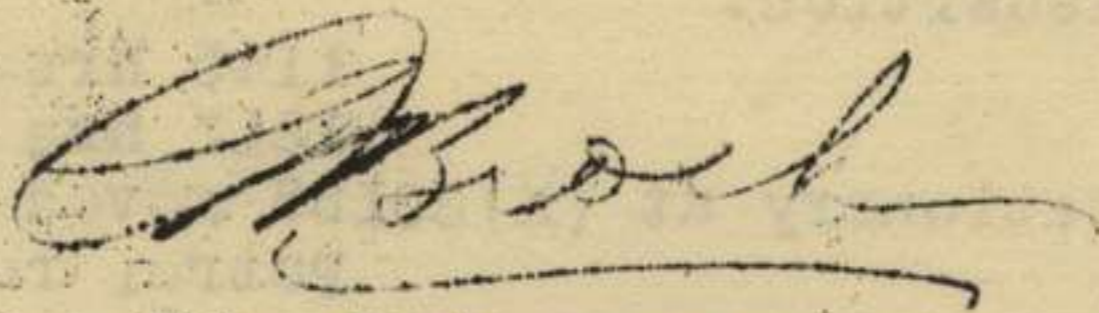
PTO

(f) EA continues to attack vehicles. His initial move is to attack vehicle from direct front or rear with his low slung guns. He then circles and takes vehicle broadside. Casualties have been suffered, and the only ones too, when tps remain near vehicles. He finds difficulty in locating men on the ground. The precaution that should be taken to avoid casualties is to move some 50 yds, if possible, in any direction 45° from head to tail line of vehicle.

CONCLUSION :

It would appear that the enemy is consolidating his posn from sea coast to marsh near frontier, with regular fwd patrols.

It does not appear that he will attack at present being mainly concerned with ascertaining our strength and dispositions by air and ground recon patrols.



Major,
Bde. Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

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As for No. 31.

Warrington

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Ref Maps : BENGHASI }
 TOBRUK } 1:500,000

Copy No. 21.

7 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde O.O. No. 6.

Information.

1. (a) As in Int summaries.
- (b) 9 Aust Div will relieve 6 Aust Div.
- (c) 2/6 Bn is being relieved on 7/8 Mar by a Bn 20 Aust Inf Bde and is moving to TOBRUK, vide Op Instr No. 22.

Intention.

2. 17 Aust Inf Bde will be relieved by 20 Aust Inf Bde on night 9/10 Mar 41.

Method.

3. 20 Aust Inf Bde will arrive in an area approx 10 kilos north of AGEDABIA on 8/9 Mar.
4. A Bn 20 Aust Inf Bde will relieve each of 2/5 and 2/7 Bns on night 9/10 Mar.
5. Recce parties from these Bns are expected on 8 Mar.
6. COs will mutually arrange for guides for incoming units and timing of fwd moves. Fwd unit will move in first.
7. No move of incoming units south of AGEDABIA before 1700 hrs 9 Mar.
8. COs 2/5 and 2/7 Bns will select areas for debussing of relieving tps. Own personnel will embus in this tpt after relief is complete and move to area vacated by 20 Bde north of AGEDABIA. 2/5 Bn on east of rd and 2/7 Bn on west of rd. Units arrange guides to meet Bde rep at AHUM turnoff at 0900 hrs 9 Mar to recce areas.
9. Relief to be completed by 2400 hrs.
10. On completion of relief of 2/5 and 2/7 Bns they will each signal the code word WHACKO.
11. Comd will pass to 20 Aust Inf Bde not later than 2400 hrs 9/10 Mar.
12. On 10 Mar 17 Aust Inf Bde Gp (less 2/6 Bn) will leave bivouac area for TOBRUK as follows :
 - (a) S.P. Kilo post 20 kilos north of AGEDABIA.
 - (b) Route TOCRA - BARCE - LUIGGI RAZZA - DERNA - TOBRUK.
 - (c) Order of march and times past S.P.

	<u>10 Mar</u>	<u>11 & 12 Mar</u>
HQ 17 Aust Inf Bde	0730 hrs	0800 hrs
2/7 Bn	0800 "	0815 "
2/5 Bn	0900 "	0845 "
A Coy 2/2 Fd Amb	1000 "	0915 "
46 LAD	1030 "	0930 "

- (d) Stages night 10/11 Mar TOCRA
 11/12 " DERNA
 12/13 " TOBRUK
- (e) Recce Recce party consisting of Bde IQ and one Int pers each Bn will move ahead each day to select bivouac areas.
- (f) The rear vehicle of each unit will fly a signal flag.
- (g) Each unit convoy will move spaced in blocks of 20 vehicles each.
- (h) Speed 20 m.i.h.
- (i) Density 10 Mar 5 v.t.m.
 11 & 12 Mar 10 v.t.m.
- (j) Halts The column will halt at following times daily - 1030-1045, 1215-1245, 1500-1515

13. 2/5 Bn will despatch tp carrying MT with guides at First Light 10 Mar to embus "A" Coy and one Pl "B" Coy at BEDA FOMM, also tpt and guide to embus one Pl "B" Coy near BENGHASI.

These detachments will join 2/5 Bn convoy as it passes their nearest point on main rd.

14. Sec 2/5 Bn at Sup pt will be relieved by mutual arrangement between CO 2/5 Bn and CO relieving Bn.

Administration.

15. Rations. Rations for consumption 8 and 9 Mar will be drawn on 7 Mar, and for consumption 10 and 11 Mar on 8 Mar. Rations for consumption 12 Mar will be drawn at DERNA on 11 Mar.
16. Water. Only sufficient captured water tanks as are required for the trek will be taken. Full capacity of all water containers remaining will be carried. WPs are at MARSA BREGA, AGEDABIA, TOCRA, DERNA, TOBRUK.
17. Medical. The ambulance wagons at present attached to units will travel with unit convoys.
18. Ammunition. (a) Each man will be issued with 50 rds SAA.
(b) Each LMG will be supplied with 1000 rds SAA and each A Tk Rifle with 20 rds .55 AP.
(c) All boxed ammunition surplus to that required in sub paras A and B will be returned to A.A.D. BENGHASI(975711) as detailed in para 21.
19. P.O.L. P.Ps. will be at Rear Bde HQ 7 kilos north of AGEDABIA, BENGHASI, and DERNA.
All vehicles will be filled at AGEDABIA on night 9/10 Mar ready to move at 0700 hrs. Refer para 21 for details for drawing at Benghasi.
20. Surplus Stores and Equipment.
All stores, surplus to W.E., captured enemy weapons and captured ammunition will be handed over to relieving units and receipts obtained.
21. Drawing of petrol at BENGHASI and return of ammunition.

At 0600 hrs 10 Mar vehicles carrying ammunition to be returned and petrol vehicles will proceed to BENGHASI under command Lieut A.W. Gray. They will R.V. at Kilo Post 15 kilos North of AGEDABIA.


The ammunition vehicles will dump ammunition and petrol vehicles will draw petrol for filling the convoy at TOCRA on night 10/11 Mar for onward move to Derna. They will then rejoin the convoy as it passes through Benghasi.

Intercommunication.

22. Bde HQ closes present location 2400 hrs 9/10 Mar and moves at head of column during move from AGEDABIA to TOBRUK.
23. Signal plan during move W/T, D.R. and L.O.
24. Bde Sig Ofcr will arrange with Sig Ofcr 20 Bde concerning cable laid.

Ack.

Signed at 1100 hrs
Method of issue - Sigs.


Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION:

2/5 Bn	Copy No. 1	T.O.	Copy No 12
2/7 Bn	2	Sup O	13
1 Bty 2/1 Fd Regt	3	O.M.E.	14
A Coy 2/2 Fd Amb	4	Rear HQ	15
Comd	5	2/6 Bn	16
B.M.	6	20 Aust Inf Bde	17
S.C.	7	3 Armd Bde	18
I.O.	8	6 Aust Div	19
L.O. 1	9	File	20
L.O. 2	10	War Diary	21 - 23
Sig O.	11	Spares	24 - 25

War Diary

SECRET.

Copy No. 13

7 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Op Instr No. 22.

1. Information as in Int summaries.
2. 9 Aust Div is to relieve 6 Aust Div.
3. 2/6 Bn will be relieved by a BN 20 Aust Inf Bde on 7/8 Mar 41.
4. On 7 Mar one Coy will relieve "C" Coy 2/6 Bn at BARCE, and one Pl will relieve one Pl "B" Coy 2/6 Bn at MADDALENA. On completion of relief "C" Coy and Pl of "B" Coy will move under comd OC "C" Coy, in tpt which delivers relieving tps, direct to TOBRUK, staging where necessary, and report to Comd TOBRUK Fortress.
5. On 8 Mar a BN 20 Bde (less Coy and Pl as in 4) will debus at BEDA FOMM, except one Pl, which proceeds to AGEDABIA. This tpt will then return to BENGHASI to pick up balance of 2/6 Bn.
6. 2/6 Bn (less "C" and one Pl "B" Coy) will move under comd Lt-Col Porter on 9 Mar, staging night 9/10 Mar at DERNA and report to Comd TOBRUK Fortress on 11 Mar.
7. Route - BARCE - LUIGI RAZZA - DERNA - TOBRUK.
8. Rations for consumption 10 Mar will be drawn at BENGHASI and for 11 Mar drawn at DID DERNA.
9. Water Full capacity will be carried from BENGHASI. W.Ps. at BARCE and DERNA.
10. P.O.L. BENGHASI - DERNA - TOBRUK.
11. Amn. (a) Each man will carry 50 rds SAA. Each IMG will carry 1000 rds, and each A Tk rifle will carry 4 mags filled.
(b) Boxed amn of all types will be returned to AAD opposite aerodrome BENGHASI prior to move.
12. Surplus stores and equipment, enemy guns and weapons will be handed over to relieving BN.
13. Medical. 2/6 BN will arrange with HQ 2/2 Fd Amb GHEMINES for an ambulance to accompany BN if one not already attached.
14. Pl of 2/5 Bn attached to 2/6 Bn at BENGHASI will remain there until tpt is sent from 2/5 Bn for them.

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Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

2/6 Bn	Copy No. 1
2/5 Bn	2
2/7 Bn	3
Comd	4
B.M.	5
S.C.	6
Sig O	7
2/2 Fd Amb	8
Rear Bde HQ	9
6 Aust Div	10
20 Aust Inf Bde	11
File	12
War Diary	13 - 15
Spares	16 - 20

Ref MAPS : AGEDABIA
EL AGHEILA
MARADA
SIRTE

1:500,000

S E C R E T.

Copy No. 19

5 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No. 31.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 5 Mar 41.

General : 2/5 Bn took over MARSALA BREGA area from 2/7 Bn night 4/5 Mar 41.

Enemy Air Activity :

1630 hrs 4 Mar 1 EA passed over Rear Bde HQ - no hostile action.

1600 hrs 4 Mar 7 enemy bombers, 2 fighters observed heading west at 1500 ft to south of (X)B 8884.

Considerable enemy air recce reported over area EL AGHEILA to approx 5 miles south of GIOFER by B 0536 via MARSH.

0955 hrs 5 Mar 1 large 4-engined EA bomber flying at 6000-7000' made circuit of area, dropping 10 bombs NW this HQ.

Mines : 1130 hrs 4 Mar 1 A/C struck enemy mine 2 miles west EL AGHEILA. Other enemy mining is reported on main rds between 17 - 18 Kilo Posts from AGHEILA.

Enemy Ground Operations.

1540 hrs 4 Mar A Sqn KDG reported 3 enemy A/Cs moving east 5 miles west EL AGHEILA on south side of road.

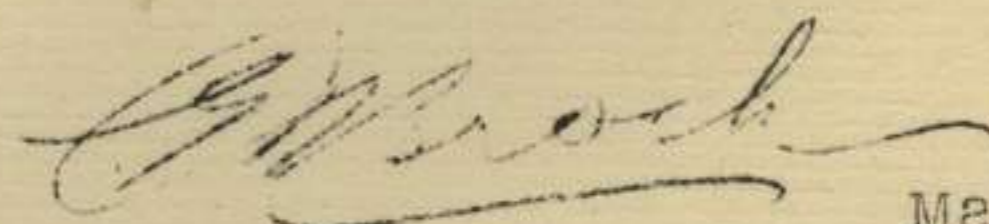
1605 hrs enemy retired rapidly westwards when engaged by our patrols.

Air Reports :

Tac/R 4 Mar reported no apparent change enemy dispositions astride main rd previously reported.

CONCLUSION :

Enemy appears to be concerned mainly with endeavouring to locate our fwd posns and flanks by ground patrols and our strength and dispositions by air recce.


Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

As for No. 30 -
add 2/1 Fd Regt.

Ref Maps : AGEDABIA
EL AGHEILA
MARADA
SIRTE

1:500,000

SECRET

Copy No. 20

4 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No. 30.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 4 Mar 41.

Enemy Air Activity.

0840 hrs 3 Mar 1 EA over AGEDABIA area. Sound of MGs reported by Rear HQ 17 Bde, coming from AGEDABIA L.G. - no casualties reported

1430 hrs 3 Mar 17 Bde Rear HQ report dive bombing on Road Dump about Kilo 40. 1 casualty. Truck dump destroyed.

0835 hrs 4 Mar 1 EA HEINKEL 111 flew around area NW 17 Bde HQ at approx 2000 ft. Appeared possibly to be photographing Main rd.

At approx 1550 hrs KDG patrol attacked by EA in area CB2130 - no casualties.

1425 hrs 9 EA observed NE of 3 Armd Bde at 5000 ft - no hostile action.

Air Reports.

Tac/R 1315 hrs 3 Mar reports 200 MT and 3 guns deployed astride main rd from (X)A 9767 to (X)A 8673, majority appeared moving west. Also 50 MT parked dispersed around well at (X)A 7878. 50 MT moving east on rd in column of route, head (X) A7280, tail (X)A 6385, latter party appeared to include AFVs which moved 2 to 3 kilos south of rd party.

Own Ground Activity.

KDGs report that at 1550 hrs 3 Mar their patrols saw 2 enemy A/Cs at B2130. Patrol report by 2/7 Bn in accordance with instructions for patrolling.

2/7 Bn standing patrols nothing to report.

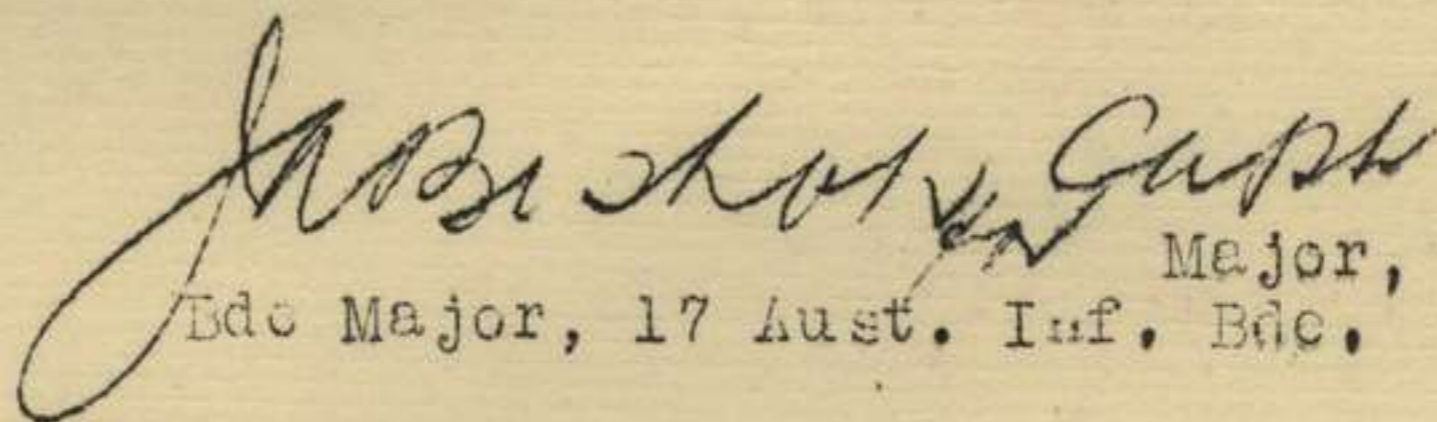
0755 hrs A Sqn KDGs reports heavy explosion heard from direction MAITEN GIOFER at 0715 hrs.

Gas :

The finding of cylinders containing Mustard Gas in vicinity of 6 Aust Div is further evidence that supplies of gas have been dumped throughout the country. Units will ensure that A/gas equipment is not allowed to deteriorate or lose efficiency and is ready for use.

Conclusion :

The air report that majority of MT near border were moving west seems to indicate that troops have been debussed and MT returning. Enemy aircraft appear to be continuing with a thorough recon of area. The wider recon by enemy A/Cs indicates a new activity in his endeavour to locate our forces and discover our intentions.


Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

Copy No	1	2/7 Bn
	2	2/5 Bn
	3	2/6 Bn
	4	1 Lt AA Bty
	5	2/2 Fd Aml
	6	Brig
	7	B.M.
	8	S.C.
	9	I.O.
	10	LO 1
	11	LO 2
	12	6 Aust Div
	13-16	3 Armd Bde
	17	Free French Bn.
	18	File
	19-21	War Diary.

SECRET

Copy No. 73

4 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Op Instr No. 21.

Inf as in Int summary.

Tac/R report 3 Mar 1315 hrs 200 MT and 3 guns deployed
the main rd from (X)A 9767 to (X)A 8673, majority appeared
going west also 50 MT parked dispersed around well at (X)A 7878,
also 50 MT moving east on rd col of route head (X)A 7280 tail (X)
A 8385, later party appeared to include AFVs which moved 2 to 3
kilos south of rd party.

3 Armd Bde are patrolling across front of 2/7 Bn to
vicinity AGHEILA and on our left flank.

2. 2/5 Bn (less one Coy and other detachments) will relieve
2/7 Bn on 4 Mar. Comd will pass to 2/5 Bn not later than 2400 hrs
night 4/5 Mar.

3. 2/7 Bn after relief will move to and occupy posn in rear
of 2/5 Bn.

4. Two Coys 2/7 Bn will remain in present posn and come
under comd 2/5 Bn.

5. Bty 2/1 Fd Regt, Sec 1 Lt AA Bty and 17 Aust Inf A Tk
Coy (less 1 gun) will remain in posns as at present.

6. Transport for movement of tps will be arranged mutually
between comds 2/5 and 2/7 Bns.

7. On completion of relief the code word HOME will be
signalled by 2/5 Bn.



Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

	Copy No.
2/5 Bn	1
2/7 Bn	2
2/6 Bn	3
Bty 2/1 Fd Regt	4
Sec 1 Lt AA Bty	5
17 Aust A Tk Coy	6
Comd	7
B.M.	8
S.C.	9
6 Aust Div	10
3 Armd Bde	11
File	12
War Diary	13-15
Spare	16-20

Ref Maps : AGEDABIA
EL AGHEILA
MARADA
SIRTE

1 : 500,000

SECRET.

Copy No... 24

3 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No. 29.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 3 Mar 41.

Enemy Air Activity :

1450 hrs Rear Bde HQ reports approx 7 EA flew in a westerly direction between HQ and AGEDABIA aerodrome, which was bombed.

1645 hrs 12 EA bombed AGEDABIA, coming in from the east, turning south when over Rear Bde HQ.

Mukhtar AGEDABIA reported receiving fatal wounds in raid. Report being investigated.

Enemy Ground Activity.

Air Reports : Strat/R 1030 hrs - 1245 hrs 1 Mar, reports 80 MT observed NUFILIA area and 12 MT, 1 fighter aircraft, 1 bomber to the east. 26 MT seen between NUFILIA and SIRTE. 300 - 400 MT, 11 fighters and 12 bombers SIRTE area. 40 bombers of which 10 possibly tp carriers and 10 fighters between SIRTE - HSUN. 3 ships approx 2000 tons, 3 fighters, 60 MT HSUN area. 85 MT, 12 fighters, 11 bombers HSUN - MISURATA. 20 fighters, 16 bombers MISURATA area.

Very little road movement between SIRTE and MISURATA.

Our patrols 2/7 Bn nothing to report.

SUMMARY OF RECCE REPORTS FROM KDGS.

AREA EL AGHEILA - MT GIOFER - EL ACCARIA - GARET EL GATIA.

General Remarks. What roads there are, are in fair condition, apart from the road running from GARET EL GATIA to the fork road EL AGHEILA (Sheet 11 (X) B.0364), which has been cut at half mile intervals. The going off the road is extremely bad and bumpy, making progress of vehicles very slow.

The salt marsh on the SOUTH WEST is impassable and the sand dunes round MT GIOFER are very steep and can only be crossed by light armoured vehicles and vehicles with independent four wheel drive. The road crossing the dune at MT GIOFER is protected by a Fort, and attacking enemy could be held up for a considerable time. There is a fort and an aerodrome at EL AGHEILA. The road SOUTH of the road junc EL AGHEILA (Sheet 11 (X) B.0364) is very strongly fortified and could be defended easily.

Map of CYRENAICA, edition of 4 Feb 41 sheets 4 and 4A. The road - MT GIOFER - EL ACCARIA is non-existent.

Roads. Road EL AGHEILA - MT GIOFER is made of stone, partly covered with sand, suitable for single line traffic. Where the stone is not covered, there is a good track by the rd. The going off the rd is extremely bad and bumpy, mainly large tufts of camel grass making progress slow and uncomfortable. The rd is protected for first mile and a half by two rd blocks composed of barrels and vehicles. The road ceases after 15 miles, although 12 miles from AGHEILA there are some wooden huts, two gravel dumps and large quantities of stone for making rds. The last 5 miles to MT GIOFER is along a moderate track.

The road from MT GIOFER - GARET EL GATIA, although marked on the map, does not exist. There is no track, but a way can be found between the salt marsh and sand dunes which resemble an escarpment. The going is very bad, being steep and rocky and can only be passed by light armoured vehicles and vehicles with four wheel drives. Here again the map seems to be inaccurate as the salt marsh comes further NORTH than its position on sheet 4.

PTO

The rd from GARET EL GALIA - Fork (EL AGHEILA) Sheet 4 (X)B.0364 is good, but it has been cut in many places. First class track by rd. Going between road and salt marsh very bumpy unsuitable except for light armoured vehicles.

Aerodrome at EL AGHEILA is small and in good condition. Very near to the Fort and very obvious from the air.

Forts. A fort at EL AGHEILA in good condition. Rd EL AGHEILA - MT GIOFER is defended for a mile and a half by two rd blocks of tar barrels and trenches on both sides of the rd.

On the rd AGHEILA - rd junc (X)B0364 sites for two rd blocks within half a mile of the fort.

Strong fort, trenches and barb wire at MT GIOFER guard the end of the salt marsh, valley and the only rd over the escarpment. Enemy coming from SOUTH would have to cross the escarpment by rd or go EAST and find difficulty in crossing the escarpment, otherwise go round the salt marsh. The rd could be guarded at the top of the escarpment.

200 yds SOUTH of the forked rd (X)B.0364 is a very strongly fortified position. Trenches and/or barbed wire extending 600 yds either side of the rd.

The rd is cut and barbed wire across it and two thick lines of sand bags. On either side of the rd by the sand bags are gun positions and sand bagged trenches.

Comment. It is curious to observe that the enemy should cut the rd from GARET EL GALIA in so many places and yet leave a first class track beside it, and also have the rd from EL AGHEILA to the fork.

AREA WADI FAREGH FROM EXCL GIOFER TO EXCL MN EL MENSICI.

1. Except in vicinity of GIOFER and BETTAFAL the WADI EL FAREGH presents no A T obstacles.

2. Greatest obstacle to AFVs is the bad soft going SOUTH of the wadi.

3. NORTH of this narrow strip the whole area is generally VERY bad bumpy going with much soft sand.

4. The best going for AFVs is generally along narrow strip immediately NORTH of the escarpment.

5. BELCLEIBAT is barely distinguishable on the ground at all. There is no pass and NO tracks here. No well found.

6. BETTAFAL is chiefly of note for the important well SOUTH of the escarpment where many camels water.

7. The distances between GIOFER - BELCLEIBAT - BETTAFAL are correct on both the CYRENAICA and AGHEILA maps.

8. Distance and bearing of BETTAFAL from B el GINN proved correct.

AREA WADI FAREGH INCL MN EL MENSICI TO EL HASEJAT.

1. The wadi presents no serious A Tk obstacle. The worst part is at SCEBLIA where the bed of the wadi is very wet and between BEDA FOMM and EL HASEJAT.

2. MN LELAIZAR has no noticeable feature, just being a wet patch.

3. Tracks.

(a) That from AGEDABIA - GTAFIA - LIN EL NAGA is good going but is indistinct until 2 miles SOUTH of GTAFIA.

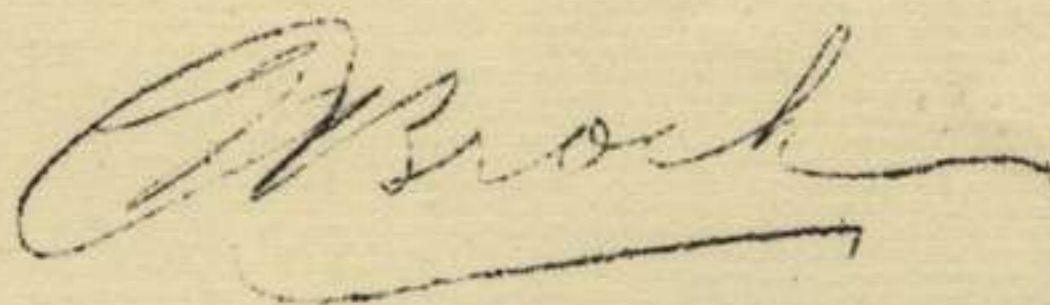
(b) The track to SOUTH of wadi FAREGH is good from LIN EL NAGA to within 5 miles of EL HASEJAT. Thereafter it turns SOUTH away from wadi. Not marked on map.

3.

- (c) Route BIR ES SUERA (X)B 56 SOUTH of SEECHA ES SEGHIRA to main rd.
- (i) Neither of the tracks shown on the map as leaving BIR ES SUERA to the WEST exist.
 - (ii) From BIR ES SUERA due WEST for 7 miles is fair going. An indistinct track which proceeds 10 miles NORTH WEST then struck. Going fair. Where this track turns due WEST (after 10 miles) a course due NORTH for 3 miles strikes the main road.

CONCLUSION :

Air reports indicate that a force, estimated a Bde Gp, moving SOUTH from MISURATA. It appears to be making good progress. Enemy air activity appears to be principally confined to recon with little offensive activity.



Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

As for "I" Summary No. 22.

maps : AGEDABIA |
EL AGHEILA |
MARADA | 1 : 500,000
SIRTE |

S E C R E T.

Copy No. *24*.....

2 Mar. 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No. 28.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 2 Mar. 41.

Enemy Air Activity.

1400 hrs 1 Mar - 1 EA reported over 2/7 Bn
- no hostile action.

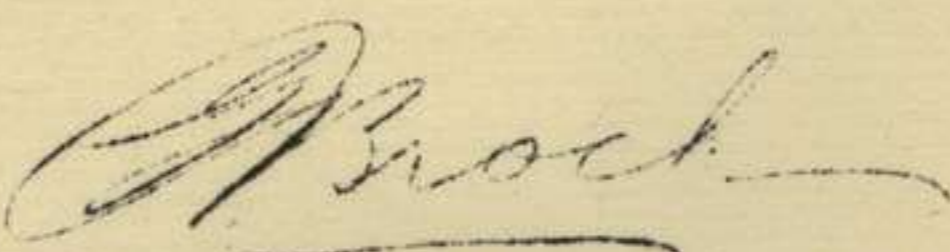
0900 hrs 2 Mar - 1 EA passed over Bde HQ
area at approx 6000' flying in south west direction. No hostile
action. Accurate AA fire by 1 Lt AA caused plane to accelerate
and climb to greater height.

1145 hrs 1 unidentified aircraft flew
overhead in SW direction at 20,000 ft.

Own Air Activity. 8 Hurricanes flew over 4 miles east of Bde
HQ, flying NE at approx 8000'.

Air Reports : Strat/R 27 Feb reports 7 ships 6000-1000 tons
18 ships below 400 tons, 9 seaplanes in or near TRIPOLI harbour.
5 cruisers, 2 destroyers 15 miles north of TRIPOLI sailing east,
changed course due west. 8 ships, believed warships, sailing
towards TRIPOLI.

CONCLUSION : EA have continued recce over the area - the
arrival of many more MT in the area seems to be attracting his
attention and recce may be to attempt to ascertain number and
type of tps.


Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

As per "I" Summary No 22.

Ref Maps: AGEDABIA
EL AGHEILA
MARADA
SIRTE

1 : 500,000

S E C R E T.

Copy No. 26

2 Mar 41.

17 Aust Inf Bde Intelligence Summary No 27.

Based on information at this HQ up to 1200 hrs 1 Mar 41.

General. KDGs passed from our command 1900 hrs 28 Feb.
2/5 Bn moved into fwd area.

Enemy Air Activity.

No EA have been reported over this area in the past 24 hrs.

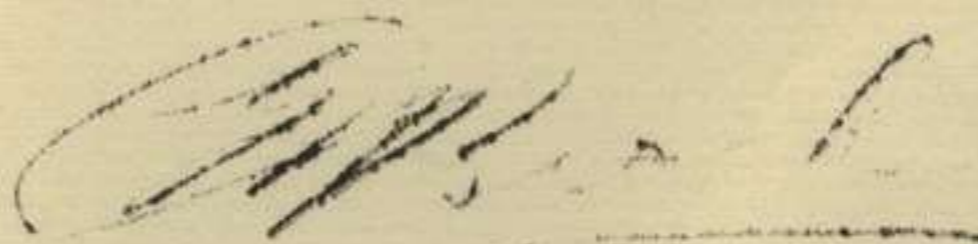
Tac/R reports 4 EA aerodrome RAS LANUF. Two trucks at resthouse 3 miles west of frontier. No activity on road and 3 to 4 miles south of road from RAS LANUF east to frontier. This area flat and fair going to sand hills approx 6 miles west of frontier.

Enemy Ground Operations.

C Sqn KDGs reported, at 1015 hrs, six medium tanks with two to four guns seen on frontier. No infantry observed.

Fwd Standing Patrols 2/7 Bn - one on Marsh (X) B57, other on main rd (X) B48, report no enemy sighted.

CONCLUSION : As details of enemy AFVs sighted this morning are not available we cannot deduce their intentions. They may only be on further reconnaissance.


Major,
Bde Major, 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

DISTRIBUTION :

As per "I" Summary No 22.

S E C R E T.

K.D.G. Op.Instrn. No.7.

1 Mar 41.

Copy No.....

Ref.Maps. EL AGHEILA: MARADA & AGEDABIA(1/500,000)

INFORMATION.

1. Enemy Strat/R reported on 24 Feb 41 a coln of 500 M.T. moving SOUTH & EAST, head at HSUN, 55 miles N.E. of SIRTE tail at TAUORGA. Nothing further has been heard of this coln. Strat/R on 26 Feb 41 reported 400 Inf. at HAODADIA (X)A4597.

Our patrols reported on 1 Mar 41. at 1015 hrs. 6 enemy Med.Tanks and 2 to 4 guns SOUTH of the Main Rd at the frontier. This coln retired at 1300 hrs.

2. Own Tps. KDG is now under commd of 3 Arm.Bde. which will be situated about the well at (X)B9182.

Australian forces as in Op.Instrn No.6 dated 24 Feb 41.

INTENTION.

3. 2/7 Bn. Aust.Inf.Regt. will be responsible from the coast to track junc. at (X)B6478.

KDG will be responsible for protective recce. WEST of NORTH-SOUTH line through MN BELCHLEIBAT(X)B44 and SOUTH of the WADI FAREGH as far EAST as incl. MN BETTAFAL (X)B85.

METHOD.

4. "A" Sqn. will select a posn. between track from EL AGHEILA to MN GIOFER and NORTH-SOUTH line through MN BELCHLEIBAT and will furnish 2 patrols daily as follows:-
No.1 Patrol to a posn of observation near or WEST of EL AGHEILA from which a watch can be kept on the Main Rd. Patrol will always be in posn from 0630 to 1900 hrs.

No.2 Patrol will patrol daily SOUTH of WADI FAREGH from NORTH-SOUTH line through MN BELCHLEIBAT to NORTH-SOUTH grid line 5 in Sq.(X)B. /inc

5. "B" Sqn. will remain in present posn. and will provide/daily SOUTH of WADI FAREGH from/NORTH-SOUTH grid line 5 Sq.(X)B.to exc. N-S grid:line 7 Sq.(X)B. /exc.

6. "C" Sqn. will take up a posn. about BIR-el-GINN and will provide 1 patrol daily to recce. SOUTH of WADI FAREGH from/NORTH-SOUTH grid line 7 Sq(X)B. to NORTH - SOUTH line through MN BETTAFAL. /inc.

7. No.2 Patrol "A" Sqn and patrols from "B"&"C" Sqns. may remain in their patrolling areas for 24 hours if desired. This is considered necessary owing to the very bad going to be crossed before reaching these areas. Outgoing patrols will relieve incoming patrols approx half way between Sqn areas and patrol areas.

8. "RHQ" and Sec 1 Lt.A.A.Bty. will move on 2 Mar 41 to area EAST of BIR-el-GINN. Exact location will be notified later.

9. Sec 1 Lt.AA.Bty at present under commd "C" Sqn. will now come under commd "A" Sqn.

ADMINISTRATIVE.

10. Echelons of "RHQ" "B" & "C" Sqns. will move up to their Sqns. daily by daylight in the late afternoon by cross country track already in use by "B" Sqn.

"A" Sqn. echelon will move by main rd. and will not start before 1800 hrs.

Time of signature 1550 hrs.

J.F.H. Weaver
Capt.,
Adjnt. K.D.G.

DISTRIBUTION:- Copy No. 1 "A" Sqn. Copy No. 2 "B" Sqn.
3 "C" Sqn. 4 "RHQ"
5 Echelon 6 O.M.

M action Moh