

**AWM52**  
**2nd Australian Imperial Force and**  
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**diaries, 1939-45 War**

**Item number: 8/2/20**

**20 Infantry Brigade**  
**Reports on Operation 1944**

FOREWORD.

It is desired to record the great value throughout the Operations of the work done by the troops of 532 EB & SR US Army who supported the Brigade. During the period from 22 Sep 43 ~~when HQ 9 Aust Div arrived~~ the date of the landing at Scarlet Beach, until 11 Oct 43 when HQ 9 Aust Div arrived at Finschhafen the services of the detachment of 532 EB & SR then under command 20 Aust Inf Bde were an indispensable factor in the success of the Operations.

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PART LA

CAPTURE OF FINSCHHAFFEN - NARRATIVE OF EVENTS FROM 18 SEP 43 TO 2 OCT 43

Planning and Preparation

MAPS - FINSCHHAFFEN Series  
1/25000 - (Second edition)

18 Sep - 20 Sep

1. At 0900 hours 18 Sep 43 Brigade Commander and staff 20 Aust Inf Bde attended a conference at HQ 9 Aust Div on the Bunga R. At this conference Commanders 1 Aust Corps and 9 Aust Div and their principal staff officers were present. The Corps Commander outlined the plan for the capture of Finschhafen and Langemak Bay for which operation 20 Aust Inf Bde Gp had been selected (COB attached).  
  
The main features of the outline plan were:-
  - (a) The troops to be transported in craft of US Task Force 76 comprising 4 APDs, 15 LCIs and 6 LSTs.
  - (b) The landing to be made at the beach immediately south of the Song R afterwards called Scarlet Beach (the origin of this name was that the beach markers to be employed were red being the same markers that had been used at Red Beach - one of the landing places for the operations against Lae).
  - (c) 12 days ammunition and 15 days maintenance were to be landed with the force.
  - (d) A large detachment of 532 EB & SR was to accompany the force to be under command 20 Aust Inf Bde.
  - (e) 5 AF would provide fighter cover and strikes on Finschhafen.
  - (f) Landing to be made on 21 Sep.
2. In the evening 18 Sep a further conference was held. Commander 20 Aust Inf Bde submitted his outline plan. He asked that the commencement of the operation be postponed for a day. All troops of the Bde Gp were tired after constant and difficult marching in the operations against Lae; the infantry battalions still had a half day's march to reach the mouth of the Burep R - the place of concentration; it was desired to have time to issue orders, give all ranks some rest and instruct them fully in their tasks. It appeared, too, that one extra day would be required for the assembly of the artillery and necessary stores. It was then agreed that the expedition leave "G" beach - (the mouth of the Burep R) on the evening of 21 Sep to land at Scarlet Beach on 22 Sep.
3. The Brigade Commander asked that the landing be made at 0515 hours. This, after consideration of times of moonset and sunrise, appeared to be the earliest time which would allow the assaulting troops some light to work in the jungle, and ensure a landing at the correct beach. The representatives of the US Navy at the conference stated that it was the desire of the Navy that the landing be made as early as possible after moonrise (0025 hours) to permit the final wave of LSTs to be unloaded and clear of the beach by first light. After discussion the time was tentatively fixed at 0515 hours. Later a message was received by HQ 9 Aust Div that the Navy could not agree to "H" hour being later than 0445 hours. This time was, therefore, accepted. It proved to be satisfactory.
4. During the morning of 19 Sep, unit commanders were given in outline by the Brigade Commander of the Brigade plan and were able to commence their own preparations.

5. The written Brigade Order was issued during the morning 20 Sep 43 and a conference of commanders of all units of the Brigade Group was held at 1500 hours when final details were checked.
6. Information available for planning consisted of a special 9 Aust Div Intelligence Summary, the documents referred to therein, including a report by a special beach recon party and some air photographs and maps of 1/25000 and 1/53350 series.
7. (a) Information secured by a special recon party, which had landed secretly near the Song R on 12 Sep 43, was, in the main, accurate and useful. But the suggestion that the enemy seen near Scarlet Beach had no established defensive positions, although perhaps true at the time the observation was made, was not true at the time of the landing. This and subsequent experience showed that, because of the enemy's skill in concealing his defences, it is necessary to accept with reservations conclusions from observation made otherwise than at very close quarters.  
(b) It is doubtful if, from a purely military - as distinct from naval - aspect, the value of such preliminary beach recones outweighs the great disadvantages which arise if they are, unknown to themselves, detected.
8. (a) A series of air photos, both vertical and oblique, was provided not on a sufficient scale. It is desirable that air photos be available for distribution down, at all events, to company commanders.  
(b) Information concerning the enemy strengths in the Finschhafen area was not precise. Estimates given varied from 350 to possibly 4000. The NGF estimate was originally 350. In fact it seems that at the date of the landing, there were probably some 4400 in the Lnagemak Bay-Finschhafen-Sattelberg areas. Of these, about 400 - 500 were naval troops.
9. During the period of preparation and assembly of equipment and stores, the intended operation and the tasks of all troops to take part were explained by commanders to all ranks. The infantry were shown on sand models their objectives on landing and were instructed in the general plan. The care given to this was repaid when the circumstances of the landing caused sub units to be, for some time, separated from the rest of their unit.
10. It was possible to plan, organize and launch the operation in so short a time only because of the experience gained in previous training and planning and in the operations against Ica. But several details of checking and preparation were barely completed in the short time available.
11. During the preparatory and planning period, the Brigade Commander and planning staff lived at HQ 9 Aust Div.
12. (a) The plan for the landing appears from 20 Aust Inf Bde CO No 6 attached, particularly the Diagram (Appendix B to that Order and also issued as Appendix B to 9 Aust Div CO No 15).  
(b) The first wave was to consist of the troops carried in 4 APDs. Each was, in accordance with normal practice, to tranship its troops when off shore into 4 landing barges LCP(R)'s. Each barge carried 36 men.  
(c) After this first assault wave, subsequent waves of LCIs and

LSTs were to beach in accordance with a timed schedule. So that apart from the complement of the APDs the landing was on a "shore to shore" not "ship to shore" basis.

- (d) It seems generally agreed that, at all events, in a small expedition, the "prearranged timings" system is preferable to the "calling in" system. It however, makes adherence to "H" hour by the first wave very important.
- (e) For the landing on Red Beach for the operations against Iae, the first LCIs had been timed to reach the beach only 8 minutes after the APD barges. This was because only two APDs were employed for that beach; the other two being on Yellow Beach. It was, therefore, in that case, thought desirable to reinforce as rapidly as possible the two companies landed from the APDs. The LCIs were there used virtually as assault craft, a role for which they are not designed and are not suitable.
- (f) For the landing on Scarlet Beach the interval between the landing of APD barges and LCIs was increased to 20 minutes as there were four APDs available and it was considered that the assault wave would therefore be strong enough to capture the beach before the LCIs came in. The value of this plan and timings cannot, however, be assessed as in the event, the first craft which actually beached on Scarlet Beach proper were LCIs, the first wave having been landed to a flank.
- (g) The calculation of timings between waves and the arrangement of craft in waves was made by the Brigade Commander in close liaison with a naval representative. This is essential as, in addition to tactical considerations, regard must be had to the time which craft in earlier waves take to retract, whether retraction is necessary before later waves beach, to what extent smaller craft, e.g. LCMs and LCVs, can beach between larger craft, the relative speeds of different categories of craft etc.

### 13. Embarkation

21 Sep 43

The embarkation and loading took place in the late afternoon at "G" and Red Beaches. It was controlled by the US Navy and by HQ 9 Aust Div. It proceeded satisfactorily except in one respect:-

One LCI failed to arrive, having had engine trouble. That it would not arrive had not been told to anyone on shore. The troops were awaiting it until during the embarkation of Wave 3 it was stated by naval representatives that the complement of the missing craft would have to be transported elsewhere. Fortunately the CO 2/13 Aust Inf Bn, one of whose companies was to embark on it, was able to arrange for the men concerned to be distributed on other craft.

The fact that the troops had not been embarked according to schedule, was made known to the Brigade Commander after he had gone aboard the HQ ship. A message was then transmitted from him from HQ ship to CO 2/13 Aust Inf Bn who was on a LCI, to ensure that he was made aware of the changed distribution of his unit.

14. (a) The craft employed in the first mission were 4 APDs, 15 LCIs, 8 LCMs, 15 LCVs and 3 LSTs.

Three further LSTs, containing part of the stores required to complete initial stocks, were also scheduled to arrive on "D" day but not until 2300 hours.

- (b) Loading Tables and Landing Diagram attached show distribution of troops to craft.

15. 9 Aust Div arranged for detachments, each of 200 men supplied by units of 26 Aust Inf Bde to travel in each LST to unload cargo on the landing beach and return to craft. This freed all operational troops for their normal duties immediately on landing.
16. (a) Stores were "bulk-loaded" not "veh loaded". It had been found previously by 9 Aust Div in tests during exercises that vehicle loading made rapid discharge of LSTs impracticable.
- (b) Some particulars of tactical vehicles carried and weight of stores on each craft appear in Craft Loading Tables, Appendix "A" to 9 Aust Div CO No 16 also issued as an Appendix to 20 Aust Inf Bde CO No 6.
- (c) Full details of stores and their loadings are outside the scope of this report, having been the responsibility of 9 Aust Div and 1 Aust Corps. The general principle was to land the force with 15 days reserve of supplies and 12 days reserve of ammunition in addition to that carried on the man. Most of this reserve was loaded at Buna under Corps supervision.
17. Some enemy aircraft over "G" Beach in the late afternoon attempted to bomb the embarkation but were driven off by fighters and dropped their bombs harmlessly in the sea.
18. The convoy and its naval escort were under weigh from off "G" Beach at approximately 1930 hours.
19. Arrangements for troops on board the LCIs were, in general, satisfactory.
20. The arrangements for the troops on APDs were on this, as on all occasions, excellent. The greatest possible assistance and co-operation was given by all ranks of the ship's company to our troops embarked on APDs. The good relations between troops of the Brigade and members of the crews of APDs were most marked during training, in the operations against Lae and in these operations.

The Landing - 22 Sep 43

21. (a) Scarlet Beach is a sandy beach about 900 yards in length. It lies in a small indentation in the coast making a well defined bay with definite headlands. At the northern end of the bay, the Song R enters the sea, at the southern end the Siki R (unnamed in 1/63360 map and first known in 20 Aust Inf Bde as Boundary Creek). Scarlet Beach proper is divided from the estuary of the Siki by a little rocky promontory on the beach; there is, therefore, at the mouth of the Siki, a small cove which is south of Scarlet Beach proper.
- (b) When the landing was made it was found that the enemy was ready. He had constructed a series of strong and well concealed pill boxes of "bunker" type covering both Scarlet Beach and Siki Cove.
22. (a) The plan was for the first wave to consist of two companies from each of the two forward battalions (2/17 Aust Inf Bn on the right, 2/13 Aust Inf Bn on the left). Each of these companies had, therefore, been embarked in one of the four APDs.
- (b) The APDs had been instructed to land their barges at definite places.
- (c) Broadly, it was intended that they land the right company (B Company of 2/17 Aust Inf Bn) as near as possible to the northern end of Scarlet Beach to enable it to capture as soon as possible the dominating feature called North Hill on the northern headland and to land the left company (C Company 2/13 Aust Inf Bn) in Siki Cove so that it could, as

speedily as possible, capture Arndt Pt - the southern headland.

23. A preliminary naval bombardment took place as planned. It was accurate and probably had some moral effect. Whether it caused many casualties to the enemy is doubtful. Few of the enemy defences appeared to have been hit.
24. X As the barges from the APDs approached the beach, they came under enemy fire. That, and probably the difficulty when off shore of distinguishing between Scarlet Beach proper and Siki Cove caused some of those on the right to veer to the left. This seems to have caused most of the first wave to swing left. In the result, one platoon of B Company 2/17 Aust Inf Bn and the 1st A platoon of that battalion organised as a rifle platoon were landed in the appointed place near the mouth of the Song R. One of the two barges carrying the missing platoons of that company should have been the right hand barge of the wave. Both, in fact, beached to the left of the appointed line in Siki Cove. Generally the whole wave beached much to the left of the appointed places. Most of the assault troops were thus landed in Siki Cove or further left on the southern headland of the bay at Arndt Pt.
25. (a) This had some adventitious advantages. Probably it enabled some of the APD barges (which are wooden not armoured) to escape fire from the enemy positions on Scarlet Beach. All barges, in fact, successfully landed their troops. The landing of some troops on the rocks of Arndt Pt proved useful. Indeed, had it not been previously ruled out by the Navy as impracticable, it would have been part of the plan.
- (b) But the disadvantages of landing not at the appointed places and with barges intermingled are obvious. Some platoons were landed detached from their companies. Companies which had made their plans to capture particular objectives found themselves in the half light before dawn separated from them by the Siki R and much thick jungle. And, most important, Scarlet Beach, the capture of which, with its immediate jungle fringe was to have been accomplished by the assault wave before the LCIs came in, had not been captured.
26. The contingency of a landing on a wrong beach or the wrong part of the beach, had been contemplated in earlier training. The assault troops, therefore, attacked the enemy posts in the immediate vicinity of the places where they were in fact landed; then re-organised and later made for their correct objectives.
27. (a) Most of Wave 2 (LCIs) also beached too far left and in Siki Cove. This meant that Wave 3 (LCIs) were the first craft to land any large number of troops on Scarlet Beach proper. Wave 3 carried troops of Bde HQ, HQ supporting arms and the reserve battalion (2/15 Aust Inf Bn) who thus landed under fire from the enemy still occupying positions fronting the beach. There were some casualties both on the craft and among men wading ashore.
- (b) One reason why the LCIs failed to beach in this appointed place was that the beach markers were not erected as early as was intended because the amphibious scouts of 532 EB & SR were landed in Wave 1 far from the places where markers were to be put.

28. (a) Due apparently to an unsuspected sand bar some LCIs seemed hesitant in beaching and dropped their ramps in 8 feet or more of water. In one case the ramps carried away.
- (b) One or two craft having struck the bar retracted, came in again and got closer. But many men had to swim ashore.
29. Some of the LCIs opened fire with 20 mms on the beach. Where the guns were brought to bear on the top of the bank beyond the beach or among the tree tops where there were some snipers, this fire had a useful effect. It certainly helped to subdue the enemy posts. But from some craft it was at first wild and undirected and caused some casualties to our own troops on the beach.
30. The enemy when assaulted abandoned his positions near the beach and it was in our hands by the time all troops of Wave 3 had got ashore.
31. There was, for a short time, some congestion of troops on the beach due to the circumstances of the landing. Parties which had become detached from their sub units found the beach the only practicable approach to their correct areas.
32. By 0630 the beach and the immediate jungle had been cleared of enemy; battalions still somewhat disorganised, were pushing on to their objectives; Bde HQ had been established at 618874 and was in line communication with battalions.
33. By 0800 hours units were well re-organised and proceeding on their tasks.
- (a) 2/17 Aust Inf Bn, with one company and two platoons across the Song R, had gained North Hill and control of the coastal track. The remainder of the battalion were re-organised and moving to correct positions.
- (b) 2/13 Aust Inf Bn had passed through part of Heldsbach Plantation meeting scattered opposition near Siki R; one company was moving towards Heldsbach Mission; one to Launch Jetty.
- (c) 2/15 Aust Inf Bn, after some mopping up, was concentrating as Brigade reserve.
- (d) AA guns were in action; 25 pdrs partly disembarking. LSTs unloading.
34. By 0930 hours unloading was finished. The LSTs had pulled away from the beach. Two had been completely unloaded. The unloading of the third had not been quite completed when it pulled out. Four beach exits had been prepared and stores were moved from the vicinity of the beach to the beach maintenance area. At this stage some enemy bombers dropped bombs on the beach, causing one casualty, but no damage.
35. By 1000 hours it was clear from two PWs statements and from contact made by our troops, that the enemy had retired from the beach positions to prepared positions on a small feature immediately west of Katika village. This position had been encountered first by A Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn, which attacked, suffered casualties, but did not gain the position and was ordered to by pass it and to move to its appointed objective, the high ground south of the Song R at 605685.

In the meantime D Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn arrived and attacked. It suffered heavy casualties and the enemy still held his ground.



36. As by 1230 the enemy was still resisting near Katika and further recce had disclosed the strength of his position, the Brigade Commander ordered that no further advance towards Finschhafen would take place until the beachhead has been stabilised; battalions were to mop up all stragglers and snipers within their own sectors; 2/15 Aust Inf Bn which, as Brigade reserve, had concentrated near Katika, was at once to relieve D Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn, which was to be withdrawn to rejoin its own unit in the south sector of the beachhead; 2/15 Aust Inf Bn to capture the enemy position near Katika.

37. At 1500 hours, two companies 2/15 Aust Inf Bn approached the Katika position from the flank after a heavy mortar bombardment. The enemy retired and the position was gained without further opposition.

38. By 1600 hrs the beachhead was firmly established. Small parties of enemy had been mopped up. One troop of artillery was shelling Finschhafen.

39. By last light the situation was:-

(a) 2/17 Aust Inf Bn:- B Coy North Hill, A Coy high ground south of Song R at 606675, remainder of battalion area 615675.

(b) 2/13 Aust Inf Bn which had driven rapidly south and west had:- A Coy on high ground astride track near Tareko, C Coy at Launch Jetty with a standing patrol on coastal track south of Quoja R, remainder of battalion Heläsbach area.

(c) 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was in reserve holding Katika area.

(d) Bde HQ 619674.

(e) A PIB patrol had moved along coastal track towards Bonga and reported track clear of enemy.

40. These dispositions were those planned as the objectives for securing the beachhead except that it was intended that A Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn should be astride the Sattelberg Road near Zag (i.e. road bend at 595646) instead of at Tareko. It reached Tareko because because the track junction near Heläsbach was then ill defined and the Tareko track appeared the more important approach in that area. It moved to Zag at first light next day; and thereafter Tareko was controlled by standing patrols.

41. At 1915 hours 115000 rounds 9mm ammunition were dropped by air; 112000 rounds were recovered. The dropping area was a kunai patch behind Scarlet Beach. As it was after dark, this area was indicated to the planes by men with torches.

This air dropping had been requested by signal to 9 Aust Div and 1 Aust Corps when it had been found at 1030 hours that very little 9mm ammunition had been landed. Apparently about five sixths of the 9mm ammunition loaded had not been landed having been in the LST which was not completely unloaded.

42. At 2330 hours the three LSTs of Wave 7 (the second mission) arrived and left at 0200 hrs. Stores were unloaded and all wounded capable of being moved were evacuated by them.

43. From PW information and captured documents, it appears that the strength of the enemy holding the Scarlet Beach - Katika area was approximately 300 - 400 (being from 9 Coy 80 Inf Regt and a company of 238 Inf Regt). A number were killed. The remainder withdrew along the Katika track towards Sattelberg.

44. (a) Australian casualties on 22 Sep were :-

Killed	3	officers	17	other ranks
Missing	1	officer	8	other ranks
Wounded	<u>1</u>	officer	<u>64</u>	other ranks
Total	5		89	

(b) The missing were all subsequently accounted for as either killed or wounded.

(c) In addition, there were casualties among the American troops of 532 EB & SR.

23 Sep 43

Advance to Bumi R

45. The intention for this day was :-

"20 Aust Inf Bde will continue the advance to Finschhafen".

Orders for this had been issued the previous night. They provided for 2/15 Aust Inf Bn to move through the outposts of 2/13 Aust Inf Bn and lead the advance with the Bumi R as its objective; 2/13 Aust Inf Bn to follow; 2/17 Aust Inf Bn to be responsible for the security of the beachhead, relieving A Coy of the 2/13 Aust Inf Bn at Zag and exploiting westward to Sattelberg with a view to occupying it, two companies to be retained within the beachhead area as a brigade reserve.

46. At 0530 hours 2/17 Aust Inf Bn began the redistribution of its companies necessary to comply with this order. North Hill and the Song R valley were taken over from B Coy by C Coy 2/2 Aust MG Bn; A company became responsible for the Katika track; D Coy relieved A Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn at Zag and PIB patrols were sent westward along the Sattelberg Road.

47. At 0730 hours 2/15 Aust Inf Bn advance began. By 1300 hours contact had been made with enemy parties near Kanlea village. These offered little resistance and by 1320 hours C Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn had gained the north bank of the Bumi R; remainder of the 2/15 Aust Inf Bn followed by the 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was following on the coastal track.

48. At the Bumi R the leading elements of 2/15 Aust Inf Bn came under heavy fire from enemy positions on the south bank. These enemy defences were subsequently found to consist of strong "bunker" pillboxes near the ford at the river mouth and a series of well dug positions (with a small amount of wire) extending along the bank of the river to beyond MT Ford (614593).

49. It appeared that any attempt to force a crossing in the face of these enemy positions would be impossible or very costly. It was decided to put into effect a previously made plan of swinging off the coastal track and continuing the advance along the ridge to the west. The Brigade Commander had informed commander 2/15 Aust Inf Bn that this would be done as soon as serious opposition was encountered; as he did not wish to have the force confined to the narrow coastal flat and permit the enemy to occupy the high ground on the flank of the track.

Consequently when the situation on the Bumi R was reported, 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was ordered to engage and contain the enemy from positions near the ford at the river mouth and to provide a detachment as advance guard to 2/13 Aust Inf Bn for the continuance of the advance along the ridge.

50. Two companies of 2/15 Aust Inf Bn (organised as a detachment with a separate HQ and command) therefore turned west off the coastal track at 614601 climbed the ridge and moved south along the crest with 2/13 Aust Inf Bn following. This march was very arduous, particularly for men carrying the heavier weapons. But by last light the advance guard companies were established on the forward slopes of the spur at 615594 subsequently known as McKeddie OP overlooking the Bumi R. Bde HQ moved to a position 200 yards west of Launch Jetty.

51. An air raid on Scarlet Beach in the late afternoon destroyed 500 cases ammunition of EB & SR but no casualties resulted.

52. Enemy artillery fire (from 70mm infantry guns in Finschhafen) was met for the first time during the afternoon.

Crossing the Bumi - 24 Sep 43

53. The intention this day was for the 2/15 Aust Inf Bn to secure a bridgehead over the Bumi R through which 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was to pass. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was to make a demonstration and maintain harassing fire against enemy positions near the river mouth while seeking a suitable crossing place up stream.

54. There having been no further activity in the Scarlet Beach area, 2/17 Aust Inf Bn was ordered to leave two companies there; the remainder of the battalion was moved to area 614601 as brigade reserve.

This left the whole Scarlet Beach held only by two companies 2/17 Aust Inf Bn, one company 2/3 Aust Pnr Bn, one company 2/2 Aust MG Bn and, in an emergency, some RAAC and AAC troops and the beach troops of 532 EB & SR.

The Brigade Commander, however, considered that as his objective was Finschhafen the situation on the Bumi made it imperative to have a reserve within close call there even at the risk of leaving Scarlet Beach vulnerable.

55. During the morning 2/15 Aust Inf Bn patrols probed through the thick jungle along the banks of the river to find a suitable crossing. They came under fire from strongly entrenched and concealed enemy positions on the south bank, in particular near the MF Ford, and suffered casualties.

56. However by 1300 hours one company had crossed the river under fire at 607589. The small bridgehead was thus made by 2/15 Aust Inf Bn; one company (D Coy) part way up the ridge on the far side of the river, and one company (B Coy) remaining and covering the crossing from the near side. These two companies were those which had formed the advance guard in the approach along the ridge, the remainder of the 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was still in the Kamloa area whence harassing fire from artillery and mortars was maintained on enemy defences near the river mouth and in Salankaua Plantation.

57. ~~X~~ During the afternoon 2/13 Aust Inf Bn began passing troops across the river at the bridgehead but were constantly harassed by enemy snipers with ILCs concealed in thick undergrowth on both flanks of the crossing place. This fire was reduced by artillery concentrations. By last light four platoons of 2/13 Aust Inf Bn had crossed, moved a short distance up the slopes on the far side and the bridgehead was firmly established.
58. Rain had fallen, difficulty was being experienced in getting ammunition and supplies forward and wounded back. The route of the advance along the ridge was too difficult for maintenance and evacuation. Cutting a jeep track through the jungle was therefore commenced to connect the coastal track at 616597 with the bridgehead. One platoon of 2/3 Aust Inf Bn from Scarlet Beach, troops of the 2/17 Aust Inf Bn and reserve companies of 2/13 and 2/15 Aust Inf Bns were employed in carrying.
59. At 1230 hours 12 enemy bombers escorted by 20 fighters attacked our gun areas at the north end of Finschhafen air field and Launch Jetty area. 60 bombs were dropped. No damage was done to guns but there were considerable casualties particularly in 2/3 Aust Inf Coy which lost 13 killed and 18 wounded. Air liaison Party equipment was destroyed. X

25 Sep 43

60. In the Bumi sector this day was spent in consolidating our positions, building up supplies, completing the jeep track, and patrolling by forward companies.
61. Activity had begun again in the Scarlet Beach area, where the two companies of the 2/17 Aust Inf Bn had been disposed well out from the beach; A Coy astride the Katika track about 1000 yards west of the village, D Coy on the Sattelberg Road at Zag.
62. Before leaving Lae, the importance of securing Sattelberg had been made known to the Brigade Commander by Commander 9 Aust Div and he had been instructed, if possible, to establish at least one company there as early as possible. A patrol which on the 23 Sep had gone far up the Sattelberg Road without meeting any enemy had reported Sattelberg to be unoccupied and Jivevenang was at first mistaken for Sattelberg. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn had been instructed that it was desired to gain control of Sattelberg as soon as possible. Consequently, D Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn (less one platoon) had moved up the road from Zag to Jivevenang on 24 Sep leaving only one platoon at Zag.
63. This company continued its advance beyond Jivevenang and reached 561647 where it met the enemy in a strong position astride the road. The company commander reported that this position probably could not be taken by one company. Enemy patrols were active and the companies telephone line was cut behind it on three occasions. The Brigade Commander therefore decided that his resources did not permit further operations against Sattelberg until Finschhafen had been captured. The company was, therefore, ordered to hold the road and not to dissipate its strength by attacking. The company commander recommended that he withdraw to the higher ground at Jivevenang where there was a position with a cleared field of fire which controlled the junction of the Sattelberg Road and the Tarsko track. This was authorised and D Coy (less one platoon at Zag) held Jivevenang from 25 Sep 43 until relieved there on 30 Sep 43.

64. At 1000 hours there was an air strike on enemy areas in Salankaua Plantation and Kedam Point.
65. Enemy air craft attacked gun areas at O445 and Scarlet Beach at 0708, 0730 and 1715 hours. There was no material damage but there were casualties to AA crews and administrative troops in the Beach area.
66. At 1600 hours Bde HQ moved to 633655 to obtain better concealment and security from air raids on the gun areas.
67. At 2000 hours our coast watchers reported a submarine off Scarlet Beach. It came inshore further south close to our gun positions and the craft was fired at by an IMG and withdrew. As it was not at first known for certain whether a raiding party had landed, one company 2/17 Aust Inf Bn was moved back to the gun area for the night as a precaution.

ACTIVITY NEAR SCARLET BEACH. CAPTURE OF SNELL'S HILL

26 Sep 43

68. This was a day of much activity in both the Bumi and Scarlet Beach sectors.
69. The Brigade Commander met commanders 2/13 and 2/15 Aust Inf Bns near the Bumi crossing during the morning, made a recce and gave orders for an operation designed to enlarge the bridgehead and get the whole of 2/13 Aust Inf Bn on the Kreutzberg range; 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was to gain the high ground at 609587 moving SE from the crossing place; the 2/13 Aust Inf Bn moving SW to gain the spur near 603584 and there to control the track coming in from Timoro.
70. The execution of this plan began at midday. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn (less one company - A Coy) crossed the river leaving A Coy to hold the position on the south bank which 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was vacating. B Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn crossed and joined D Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn on the far side. One platoon of A Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was moved from Kamloa to the bridgehead and disposed to prevent enemy penetration up the line of the river as our troops moved forward.
71. At last light the leading company (C Coy) 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was in contact with a dug in enemy position astride the track at 604583 - the rest of the battalion (less A Coy) being in depth between there and the river.
72. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn in the late afternoon launched a completely successful two company attack (B and D Coys) on the kunai patch feature 611586 - 608586 afterwards known as Snell's Hill. The final assault was made with great vigour after a laborious climb up a precipitous slope. The position was a strong one held by about 100 - 150 Japanese marines. They broke and fled as our assault came upon them, leaving 40 to 50 dead and considerable quantity of arms and equipment including three 13mm machine guns, IMGs and numerous rifles. The result of the operations was that the whole of the enemy defences in Salankaua Plantation and Kakakoc were dominated by our forces.

73. In the meantime there had been a resumption of enemy activity in the Scarlet Beach - Satelberg Road area. Enemy patrols penetrated down the Song Valley and towards Katika. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn patrols operating west of Katika made contact with enemy parties on the kunai patch at 603675 and near the village at 574672. These were engaged by artillery, FOCs being with the patrols.
74. In these patrol clashes a number of enemy were killed. They included a company commander who was carrying an operation order. This was translated and showed that the enemy met by our patrols had been the advance elements of a battalion attack. The order was issued by Lt col Takaki commanding 3 Bn 80 Inf Regt from his HQ at Sisi. It ordered that battalion less two companies plus the company 238 Inf Regt (which had withdrawn from Scarlet Beach after our landing) to attack east "to isolate the enemy forces in the Heldsbach area and annihilate them". The operations were to have begun at dawn on 26 Sep 43.
75. In addition to this patrol contact made by A Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn from Katika, D Coy at Jivevenang was also engaged. Three times during the night 26/27 Sep small parties attacked its positions. All were repulsed leaving some equipment and some dead.
76. Enemy air craft made two ineffective raids, one at 0820 hours on Scarlet Beach and one at 1705 hours on Finschhafen Airfield.

27 Sep 43

77. Although the enemy plans 26 Sep had apparently been dislocated by the aggressive action of the two companies of 2/17 Aust Inf Bn, enemy activity in Scarlet Beach - Satelberg Road sector continued. Telephone lines to Jivevenang and Zag were cut. Enemy recce patrols were observed. PIB reported increasing enemy traffic near Bonga. All LOB troops were therefore organised as a reserve and placed in the Katika area.
78. In view of this increased activity and the knowledge of the Jap intentions, commander 20 Aust Inf Bde requested of 9 Aust Div the despatch of an additional battalion to guard the beachhead area and enable him to concentrate his force for the capture of Finschhafen. He also asked for a squadron of tanks hoping to use them against the enemy defences in Salankaua Plantation.
79. <sup>De v</sup> In the Bumi sector a redistribution of our forces was made to ~~commit~~ a further advance. A Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn, one of the two companies at Kamioa, was moved to the bridgehead area to release A Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn which joined its battalion on the south side of the river. This left only C Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn at the mouth of the Bumi.
80. South of the river 2/15 Aust Inf Bn activity was confined to patrolling.
81. C Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn captured the enemy position in front of them at 604583. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was ordered to hold the position thus gained (which was afterwards known as Starvation Hill) in order to secure our right flank and to prevent an attack <sup>Tirimoro</sup>. C Coy was therefore left there and held the position until after the capture of Finschhafen. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn less C Coy then moved SE to a position near Snell's Hill preparatory to an attempt to capture Kakakoc by coming down the spur behind it.

12 (a)

82. At 0900 hours Bde HQ moved to 606618.

28 Sep 43

83. Reports from P I B of enemy movement from Finschhafen on inland tracks to Sateiberg, observed movement in Salankaua Plantation and noise of barge traffic each night suggested that the enemy might be gradually withdrawing from Finschhafen. But any exposed movement by us still called forth much enemy fire; in captured documents the enemy naval troops were exhorted to stand firm and told that Finschhafen must be held. Air recce disclosed extensive defences in Salankaua Plantation. The Brigade Commander considered that the capture of Kakakoc was essential to gaining control of Finschhafen as

the command of this area by us would probably make the Plantation positions untenable. The main enemy positions at Kakakoc appeared to be in some half demolished buildings known as "Triangle" (614582) and others at "City" (617582).

84. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was ordered to capture these positions. Artillery harassing fire was maintained on the known enemy areas. And the battalion (less C Coy) moved SE in an endeavour to approach the position from the west. This move proved slow and difficult. A path had to be cut through thick undergrowth. The enemy was heard preparing defences to meet the threat and concealed snipers caused casualties to our troops. A ravine near the head of Ilebbe Creek (which was not correctly delineated on the map then in use) impeded progress. By last light it was apparent that to approach to Kakakoc by that route would be a slow process.

85. Patrols from 2/15 Aust Inf Bn moved down the river towards Ilebbe Creek without meeting any enemy but came under fire.

86. An air strike took place at 1500 hours on enemy defences in the Finschhafen area.

29 Sep 43

87. Torrential rain commenced during the night 28/29 and continued at intervals all day. This increased the difficulty of carrying supplies to the forward troops on the range, particularly at Starvation Hill. Probing by 2/13 Aust Inf Bn found no easier approach on the line which had been chosen, and it was decided during the afternoon that the plan of outflanking the Kakakoc position from the west should be abandoned. Surprise had been lost; the enemy was aware of our intentions; there was a steady drain of casualties for little gain, and the maintenance of supplies was becoming precarious and expensive in manpower.

88. Patrols from 2/15 Aust Inf Bn found that the enemy had withdrawn from positions west of Ilebbe Creek and had abandoned weapons and equipment there. But movement by us further east into Salankaua Plantation was prevented by enfilade fire from the direction of Kakakoc.

89. PIB patrols and interrogations of natives indicated that large parties of enemy were withdrawing from the Finschhafen-Langemak Bay and Logawang areas and passing through Tirimoro-Gurunkor-Kumawa to the general area of Sattelberg. This news seemed to make the task of gaining Finschhafen easier but caused some concern for the security of the maintenance area at Scarlet Beach. The knowledge that 9 Aust Div had been able to arrange for the despatch of 2/43 Aust Inf Bn was welcome.

Arrival 2/43 Aust Inf Bn. Preparation for attack.

30 Sep 43

90. During the night 29/30 Sep 2/43 Aust Inf Bn arrived by APDs and had disembarked at Scarlet Beach at 0515 hours.

91. On landing, commander 2/43 Aust Inf Bn was given an operation instruction and special intelligence summary. Copy of operation instruction is an appendix to this report. The Brigade Commander met commander 2/43 Aust Inf Bn at Scarlet Beach early in the morning and told him of his wish to have the two companies (A and D Coys) 2/17 Aust Inf Bn, which were on the Katika track and at Jivevaneng, relieved as soon as possible so that he could concentrate his force for an attack on Finschhafen, and also to have position at Jivevaneng reinforced with a view to further advance to Sisi and Sattelberg which would be a probable later task for 2/43 Aust Inf Bn.



92. Enemy snipers continued to be active on the Sattelberg Road but by 1545 hours the relief of both A and D Companies 2/17 Aust Inf Bn on the Katika track and at Jivevenang had been completed, and by last light these companies had reached Heldsbach Plantation preparatory to rejoining their battalion.
93. Two companies 2/15 Aust Inf Bn advanced to the line of Ilebbe Creek and dug in on a small rise in area 615585 facing enemy positions on the far bank. This move confined the enemy to the east side of the creek in that area and made it possible to use the MT Ford and bring jeephead south of the river there.
94. A tank recon party arrived with 2/43 Aust Inf Bn. Lack of shipping had made it impossible for 9 Aust Div to obtain the despatch of the tanks which the brigade had requested.
95. 139 walking wounded were evacuated by the APDs which brought 2/43 Aust Inf Bn. But many lying patients had still to be held by the MDS and CCS at Scarlet Beach.
96. Six LCMs were sent at 0630 hours to Red Beach where they were to pick up supplies and ammunition.
97. After a further recon made by the Brigade Commander, in company with commander 2/13 Aust Inf Bn, orders were given for an attack on the Kakakoc position the following day. The attack to be made by 2/13 Aust Inf Bn, less C Coy, which was to hold the Starvation position, 2/15 Aust Inf Bn to be concentrated in the general area of Snell's Hill as brigade reserve, with one company in readiness to come under command 2/13 Aust Inf Bn if required, because that unit was operating with only three companies; 2/17 Aust Inf Bn to relieve C Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn at Kamloa with one company and the two companies of 2/15 Aust Inf Bn on Ilebbe Creek with one company; the remainder 2/17 Aust Inf Bn to move to a position on the north bank of the Bumi near MT Ford in readiness to exploit into Salankaua Plantation.
- The objective for 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was the Triangle - City feature. The next brigade objective was the feature known as "Manager's House Spur", between Kakakoc and the large house at 621577.
- The attack was to begin immediately after an air strike timed for not before 1100 hours and not after 1200 hours 1 Oct 43.
98. Preparations in accordance with this plan began in the afternoon. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn selected as a FUP the reverse slope of a small kunai hill 614586. A covered approach to this position was reconed and before last light one platoon was established on it to secure it. B Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn took over the position at Kamloa from C Coy 2/15 Aust Inf Bn which rejoined its battalion near Snell's Hill. RAE improved the track to MT Ford and the crossing there enabling wounded to be more easily evacuated by jeep.

Attack on Kakakoc

1 Oct 43

99. Final dispositions were made early in the morning. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn placed one platoon 300 yards in front of the FUP to protect the move of the battalion to the FUP. By 1045 hours preparations were complete. A and D Companies 2/17 Aust Inf Bn had arrived from Heldsbach Plantation and joined their unit, which had taken over the position on Ilebbe Creek. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was concentrated. Final details for the supporting fire programme were coordinated to include mortar and MMG shoots from near Kamloa on the defences in Salankaua Plantation, and artillery regimental concentrations on Kakakoc to follow the air strike.
- The Brigade Commander moved his tactical HQ to HQ 2/15 Aust Inf Bn at 610586 for the operation.

100. At 1035 hours our air force commenced bombing and strafing the Finschhafen area. The air strike thus began half an hour early, but this caused no difficulty as the infantry and artillery were ready. The last bombers over the target at 1108 hours fired flares as arranged. The artillery concentration then began and at 1115 hours the infantry were moving forward.
101. The battle resolved itself into two separate engagements. One company as it moved forward came under fire from strong and concealed enemy positions just west of Illebbe Creek at 617585. It turned east and attacked there with great bravery. After some fierce fighting at close quarters culminating in a bayonet assault, the positions were captured. Fifty one enemy were killed. The others fled further east. The company then turned south to continue the advance on Kakakoc. The rest of the battalion attacking towards Triangle met strong resistance and found progress difficult. The enemy posts at Triangle were found to be at the top of a cliff face hidden by thick undergrowth. Somewhat disorganised by the undergrowth and having failed to find a feasible approach to the Triangle position the troops were re-organised and moved SE towards City. Hard fighting continued all the afternoon with our troops making gradual progress. Towards last light they were established on a small spur about 100 yards short of their objectives at City. The enemy was still resisting strongly and the Brigade Commander ordered the ground gained to be held but no further attempt to be made until next morning.
102. As the result of this engagement the enemy was found to be withdrawing from his positions in Salankua Plantation, and 2/17 Aust Inf Bn patrols crossed Illebbe Creek and began some mopping up at about last light. But the enemy was still resisting in his positions near the Bumi mouth.
103. One company 2/15 Aust Inf Bn had moved forward to hold part of the ground gained by 2/13 Aust Inf Bn and had done some mopping up. The remainder of 2/15 Aust Inf Bn remained concentrated. The battalion Commander was warned that he might be required to resume the offensive next day.
104. The enemy during the day made a small attack on our company at Starvation Hill but was repulsed with casualties to him and none to us.
105. The battle for Kakakoc had been costly to the enemy. His dead were 80/100. Our casualties were 10 killed and 70 wounded.
106. While the attack on Kakakoc was in progress matters had taken an unsatisfactory turn on the Sattelberg Road. 2/43 Aust Inf Bn (less two companies) moving up the road to reinforce the company at Jivevaneng had met enemy who had occupied a position astride the road at 573596, and they were unable to reach their company at Jivevaneng. A company attack on the enemy position gained some ground but failed to clear the track. At the end of the day the battalion had lost 7 killed and 31 wounded; and the company at Jivevaneng was isolated.
107. Enemy aircraft were again active and made four raids during the day on Scarlet Beach and the gun positions near Finschhafen Airfield. No damage or casualties resulted.

2 Oct 43.

Occupation of Finschhafen

108. In the morning it was found that the enemy had withdrawn from the Kakakoc position and from the positions in the plantation near the Bumi mouth.

2/13 Aust Inf Bn was, therefore, ordered to occupy Kakakoc and to continue mopping up and patrolling on the Kreuzberg range. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was ordered to move via Managers House spur with its objective Simbang, and 2/17 Aust Inf Bn on the axis of the main Finschhafen road, mopping up in the Plantation, and with its objective Kolem.

109. A few stragglers only were met. The enemy had vacated the whole of the Finschhafen area leaving many weapons and much equipment of all kinds.

By 1230 hours our troops had reached the shore of Langemak Bay and during the afternoon contact was made with a forward patrol of 22 Aust Inf Bn at Gôdowa on the south bank of the Mape R.

110. 22 Aust Inf Bn had marched from Lae by the coastal track, clearing small enemy parties. The enemy had apparently estimated its strength as a brigade, and its approach undoubtedly was an important factor in causing his abandonment of strong positions at Loguweng, and the withdrawal of all his troops to the north of the Mape R.

22 Aust Inf Bn came under command 20 Aust Inf Bde.

111. Reports from natives and observation from McKeddies OP showed enemy retreating by the route Timororo-Gurunkor-Satelberg.

In the northern sector the situation had not improved.

112. A patrol on the coastal track towards Bonga found that enemy had come into a position astride the track 1200 yards north of the Song R. And on the Satelberg Road, a Coy 2/43 Aust Inf Bn was still cut off at Jivevaneng from the rest of the battalion, although messages had been got to it by a PIS patrol.

113. (a) Australian casualties in the Brigade Group from the landing on 22 Sep 43 to 0600 hours 2 Oct 43, immediately after capture of Finschhafen, were :-

Killed	8	officers	65	other ranks
Wounded	12	officers	264	other ranks
Missing	-	officers	9	other ranks
<u>Total</u>	<u>20</u>		<u>338</u>	

(b) The missing were subsequently accounted for as killed or wounded.

(c) In addition to the above battle casualties 6 officers and 295 other ranks had been evacuated from Australian units sick during the period; but some of these were back with the units by 2 Oct 43.

(d) The above figures do not include American casualties. In 532 EB & SR there were 8 killed and 42 wounded and 2 killed in the American Air Liaison Party.

(e) The strength of the three infantry battalions of the brigade on embarkation on 21 Sep 43 was :-

2/13 Aust Inf Bn	33	officers	660	other ranks
2/15 Aust Inf Bn	29	officers	680	other ranks
2/17 Aust Inf Bn	29	officers	526	other ranks
20 Aust Inf Bde LOB Co	8		105	

Their strength on 3 Oct 43 including LOB troops in the area was :-

2/13 Aust Inf Bn	26	officers	485	other ranks
2/15 Aust Inf Bn	25	officers	569	other ranks
2/17 Aust Inf Bn	26	officers	546	other ranks
20 Aust Inf Bde LOB Co	7	officers	104	

PART 1 B

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS FROM 3 OCT TO 11 OCT 43

1. Finschhafen had been captured, but to secure the gains it would be necessary to continue the offensive and to get possession of Sattelberg as soon as possible. This was now clearly too great a task for the one battalion - 2/43 Aust Inf Bn - in the northern sector. The enemy was digging in on the Sattelberg Road and to attempt to force a way by that route alone did not seem propitious. The Brigade Commander therefore decided to capture the Kumawa area with 2/17 Aust Inf Bn with a view, firstly, to cutting the track through Gurunkor-Kumawa-Sisi-Sattelberg and thus disorganising the enemy's retreat, and, secondly, bringing pressure on Sisi with a view to securing the road junction there and assisting an advance on the Sattelberg Road.
2. After Finschhafen was taken 22 Aust Inf Bn was made responsible for searching, mopping up and holding the area south of Langemak Bay with a detachment at Dreger Harbour including Logaweng, and RAE were instructed to provide a ferry on the Mape R and to improve the track to Dreger Harbour. An instruction received by 20 Aust Inf Bde from 9 Aust Div made the Brigade responsible for the area from Dreger Harbour to Bonga.
3. A further instruction to 20 Aust Inf Bde stated that 2/43 Aust Inf Bn should not be used operationally if avoidable but should be kept in reserve in anticipation of its rejoining 24 Aust Inf Bde, which was shortly to come into the area.
4. It was therefore decided that after capturing Kumawa 2/17 Aust Inf Bn should push on to the Sisi road junction; and that when it gained that area 2/43 Aust Inf Bn could be withdrawn from Jivevaneng; 2/43 Aust Inf Bn in the meantime to close the gap of approximately 400 yards between it and company isolated in the village, preferably by reaching it, but if necessary by the company fighting its way back to the main body.
5. The plan was to be put into execution immediately. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn to move early in the morning of 3 Oct 43; 2/15 Aust Inf to hold Simbang and patrol to Tirimoro; 2/13 Aust Inf Bn to be in reserve in the Kakakoc area, salvage and clean up the battlefield there and patrol to Tirimoro.

3 Oct 43

6. Enemy activity north of the Song R much increased and an enemy party (later found to be one company) reached a position astride the coastal track about 600 yards north of the river. The commander of the beachhead maintenance area therefore reinforced the elements of 2/43 Aust Inf Bn and C Coy 2/2 Aust MG Bn, which were holding the coastal track and North Hill, with C Coy 2/3 Aust Pnr Bn.
7. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn moved by march route and ferrying in all three tonners available, from Kolem to track junction at 611630. From there it was to be led by native guides by a track trafficable by jeeps to Kiasawa 1 and thence by a native pad through Kiasawa 2 to Kumawa. This route was subsequently known as Easy Street.

8. By the time 2/17 Aust Inf Bn reached the Easy Street junction knowledge of the situation north of the Song R had caused a new decision to be taken. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn was too far away to be an effective reserve for use in the Scarlet Beach area. Consideration was given to moving it by ESB craft but the risk of enemy air strafing of daylight moves was at that stage considerable. The Brigade Commander wished to avoid postponing the move to Kumawa, as this seemed the most likely place in which to regain contact with retreating enemy. It was therefore decided to detach two companies (A and B) 2/17 Aust Inf Bn organised with a separate HQ and known as "McLarn's Detachment" to come into brigade reserve in the Scarlet Beach area; 2/17 Aust Inf Bn (less McLarn's detachment) to continue the advance to Kumawa.
9. This was done and by last light 2/17 Aust Inf Bn (less McLarn's detachment) had reached Kiasawa 1. McLarn's detachment 2/17 Aust Inf Bn was in the Scarlet Beach area.
10. After patrolling and much artillery preparation during the day 2/43 Aust Inf Bn attacked again in the afternoon with one company in an attempt to reach its company at Jivevaneng. The enemy position was strongly placed. Thick bamboo made our approach difficult. The attack was a gallant attempt but the company remained cut off.
- 4 Oct 43
11. The enemy, pressed by elements of 2/3 Aust Pnr Bn, withdrew from close contact with our FDLs north of Song R, but continued intermittently to engage our positions by fire from further north. An officer went in a LCV from Scarlet Beach to offshore at Gusika to reconnoitre the enemy positions from seaward. He drew fire from positions about 900 yards north of Song R but no further north. It was decided to attempt to surround the enemy position by a move through North Hill, therefore McLarn's detachment 2/17 Aust Inf Bn moved across Song R to an assembly area for the move next day.
12. 4 AC Sqn dropped ammunition and supplies for A Coy 2/43 Aust Inf Bn isolated at Jivevaneng, also a message (confirming message sent by PIB scouts) ordering this company to make its way out and rejoin the main body of the battalion. The company 2/43 Aust Inf Bn withdrew at 1330 hours and rejoined its main body making a detour round former enemy position.. During the period it had held the village it had inflicted numerous casualties on the enemy. The enemy astride the road in rear of the village also withdrew (apparently about the same time) probably as a result of casualties suffered in his attacks on A Coy and the attacks on him.
13. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn (less McLarn's detachment) reached the track junction near Kumawa village.
14. In the Finschhafen sector patrols 2/13 and 2/15 Aust Inf Bns patrolled west and north in Kreutberg Range as far as Tirimoro, which was found then unoccupied.

5 Oct 43

15. McLarn's detachment 2/17 Aust Inf Bn moved along the high ground west of the enemy position on the coastal track and encircled it. When the coastal track was reached after heavy going, it was found that the enemy had withdrawn. Captured documents indicated that the enemy was not in full retreat but apparently intending some offensive action against us.
16. Two coys 2/43 Aust Inf Bn occupied the Jivevaneng position where its A Coy had been.
17. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn (less McLarn's Detachment) moved from the track junction south of Kumawa to that village. After a brief skirmish, in which the enemy suffered casualties, the village area was captured.
18. Patrolling and salvage continued in the Finschhafen sector.

6 Oct 43

19. Patrols found no sign of enemy on the coastal track to Bonga; withdrawal therefore began of our troops who had been moved to the North Hill area to meet the enemy threat there.  
One company 2/43 Aust Inf Bn relieved C Coy 2/3 Aust Pnr Bn and took over the coastal track; A and B Coys 2/17 Aust Inf Bn withdrew to north bank Song R.
20. 2/43 Aust Inf Bn patrols from Jivevaneng found enemy in position at "The Knoll" about 500 yards west of the village.
21. At Kumawa the enemy became active, parties coming along the track from Finschhafen began to close in on 2/17 Aust Inf Bn positions. Contact in the area was continuous and close. One company 2/17 Aust Inf Bn in attempting to continue the advance to Sisi from Kumawa found enemy astride the track near the Quoja R. It became apparent that if 2/17 Aust Inf Bn were to vacate the Kumawa position the track junction there would be occupied by the enemy. And the battalion was not strong enough, with two companies away, to hold this vital track junction and also to continue to advance.
22. In the Finschhafen sector 2/15 Aust Inf Bn (less two companies) crossed the Mape R preparatory to relieving 22 Aust Inf Bn as orders had been received that it should be available to return to Lae.
23. The increase in enemy activity and resistance in the Kumawa area caused a change in the plan of sending 2/17 Aust Inf Bn from Kumawa through Sisi. While adhering to the intention of eventually concentrating 2/17 Aust Inf Bn on the Sattelberg Road, the Brigade Commander decided for the present that it (less McLarn's Detachment) should retain control of Kumawa until 2/15 Aust Inf Bn could reach there and keep open the easy street route. In the meantime the forward companies 2/43 Aust Inf Bn would be relieved at Jivevaneng by McLarn's Detachment 2/17 Aust Inf Bn. It was hoped later, when 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was at Kumawa and 2/17 Aust Inf Bn concentrated on the Sattelberg Road, to continue operations against Sattelberg, one battalion advancing on the Sattelberg Road, one through Mararua. But as it turned out the increasing strength of the enemy made this beyond the capacity of the brigade alone.

To enable 2/15 Aust Inf Bn to move to Kumawa, 2/13 Aust Inf Bn with elements of 2 Aust MG Bn was to become responsible for the whole of the Finschhafen area and relieve the 2/15 Aust Inf Bn companies south of Mape R; in addition the retention of 22 Aust Inf Bn in the area was requested.

24. Heavy rain fell during the night.

7 Oct 43

25. North of Song R B Coy 2/43 Aust Inf Bn moved to vicinity Bonga village. An order had been received from 9 Aust Div that the brigade would secure the junction of the Bonga-Wareo track. Later, a forward patrol 2/43 Aust Inf Bn encountered enemy about 300 yards south of Gusika.
26. B Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn reached Jivevaneng from Song R and relieved one company 2/43 Aust Inf Bn which prepared to move to Song R on 8 Oct, there to relieve A Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn.
27. At Kumawa during the night 6/7 Oct the enemy had pressed even closer upon 2/17 Aust Inf Bn, which was much engaged and in danger of being surrounded.  
2/15 Aust Inf Bn (less two companies which had come from south of Mape R) reached Kiasawa in the afternoon and bivouaced there en route to Kumawa. The remaining two companies bivouaced near Easy Street junction.
28. Further heavy during night.

8 Oct 43

29. The relief of 2/43 Aust Inf Bn troops in Jivevaneng area was completed on arrival of A Coy 2/17 Aust Inf Bn from Song R. One company 2/43 Aust Inf Bn however remained Jivevaneng area until 12 Oct 43 when it moved back to position near Zag.
30. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn (less two companies) reached Kumawa at 1230 hours.
31. Further heavy rain made Easy Street unusable for jeeps and caused the destruction of the bridge over Song R by flood.

9 Oct 43

32. In Jivevaneng area McLarn's Detachment 2/17 Aust Inf Bn made a surprise flank attack on "The Knoll" (565645) and captured it by assault. This gave us possession of the dominating ground on the Sattelberg Road east of the Sisi Road junction and secured our position at Jivevaneng.  
The enemy during the afternoon and at night made four separate and determined counter attacks on our positions on "The Knoll". All were repulsed with heavy enemy casualties.

33. It was decided to concentrate 2/17 Aust Inf Bn in the Jivevaneng area, if possible, by a move from Kumawa around the east flank of the enemy position at Sisi to join McLarn's Detachment at Jivevaneng; and to build up reserve of supplies and ammunition for operations against Sattelberg in accordance with orders received; 2/15 Aust Inf Bn to operate from Kumawa, 2/17 Aust Inf Bn from Jivevaneng.
34. The remainder (two companies) of 2/15 Aust Inf Bn arrived at Kumawa, in which area the enemy continued active. Maintenance of our force there was becoming precarious owing to the very bad nature of the track in wet weather, and the risk of the enemy cutting it. R&E were working hard to improve the track but jeephead was at Kiasawa 2 in dry weather and not so far in wet. A few native porters had been recruited. As jeeps could not be used, they, with one company 2/3 Aust Pnr Bn and one company 2/15 Aust Inf Bn, were employed in carrying ammunition and supplies to Kumawa.
35. In the Finschhafen area 2/13 Aust Inf Bn patrols up the Mape R found evidence of enemy still in that area.

10 Oct 43

36. 2/3 Aust Pnr Bn took over the responsibility for close defence of Scarlet Beach and the Katika track. This battalion (less C Coy) had just arrived at Finschhafen and come under command 20 Aust Inf Bde, C Coy having been with 20 Aust Inf Bde throughout the operations.
37. A patrol from 2/43 Aust Inf Bn found signs of considerable enemy movement on tracks in Gusika area.
38. At Jivevaneng the enemy made a strong attack on our positions from the north which was repulsed.
39. A patrol from 2/17 Aust Inf Bn at Kumawa found a practicable route to Jivevaneng across the Quoja valley, by-passing the enemy positions near Sisi.
40. In the Finschhafen sector patrols from 2/13 Aust Inf Bn found the enemy had occupied Tirimopand A Coy 2/13 Aust Inf Bn made contact with the enemy on the Mape R, 2000 yards west of Simbang and took up a position covering the track junction there.

11 Oct 43

41. GOC and HQ 9 Aust Div arrived at Finschhafen.
42. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn (less McLarn's Detachment) marched by by-pass route previously found to Jivevaneng area and joined McLarn's Detachment there at 1715 hours. The battalion then occupied positions on the Sattelberg Road from inclusive "The Knoll" to inclusive the feature 400 yards east of Jivevaneng village.



These positions were held by the 2/17 Aust Inf Bn against repeated attacks, and in very close contact, during the period of the enemy counter offensive until 4 Nov 43 when after the enemy counter attacks had spent their force the enemy was driven back to positions covering the approaches to Sattelberg and on 5 Nov the battalion was relieved by 2/24 Aust Inf Bn.

43. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn remained Kumawa.

44. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn remained Sinechahon area and maintained contact with enemy near Tirimoro and on the Mape R.

45. The situation when Div K<sub>1</sub> arrived was therefore :-  
2/43 Aust Inf Bn was widely dispersed Scarlet Beach-North Hill area with a strong detachment controlling the track junction near Songe and patrols making contact with the enemy near Gusika. It was being gradually concentrated after having been for a time, of necessity, required to be responsible for an over large area.  
2/3 Aust Inf Bn was holding the Katika track, with one company engaged in carrying on Easy Street. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn was in contact with enemy strongly dug in astride the Sattelberg Road in front of Jivevaneng. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn was in contact with strong enemy positions near Kumawa. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn had one company in contact at Tirimoro and one company in contact on the Mape R. 2/2 Aust MG Bn (less C Coy) had just arrived, C Coy having been with 20 Aust Inf Bde throughout the operation. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn (less the companies on the Mape R and at Tirimoro) and part of 2/2 Aust MG Bn constituted the slender brigade reserve. 22 Aust Inf Bn was south of Langemak Bay.

PART 1 C

OPERATIONS AFTER ARRIVAL OF HQ 9 AUST DIV ON 10 OCT 43  
TO 21 JAN 44

1. The operations of the Brigade after the arrival of HQ 9 Aust Div at Finschhafen are beyond the scope of this report, being dealt with in detail in the report of 9 Aust Div. The main events are briefly summarised below.
2. 2/17 Aust Inf Bn held its positions at Jivevaneng until 5 Nov 43. From 16 Oct to 3 Nov the battalion position was invested by the enemy who maintained close pressure and made several attacks in conjunction with his main counter offensive against Scarlet Beach. The enemy established himself strongly at 576648 astride the Sattelberg Road in rear of the 2/17 Aust Inf Bn position. Access by that route was thus closed until 3 Nov 43 when the enemy was forced to withdraw by combined pressure from 2/17 Aust Inf Bn and 2/13 Aust Inf Bn and an outflanking move by the latter. During the period in which 2/17 Aust Inf Bn was thus "cut off" supplies were taken in and wounded evacuated by an alternative route from Kiasawa 2 across the Quoja R and towards the end of the period by the Tareko track.  
On 4 Nov the enemy offensive was waning and the battalion, after hard and sustained fighting at close quarters, cleared the north outskirts of the Jivevaneng position as far as the Siki R. On 5 Nov the battalion was relieved by 2/24 and 2/48 Aust Inf Bns in preparation for 26 Aust Inf Bde operations against Sattelberg.
3. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn held Kumawa until 3 Nov when it was relieved by 2/23 Aust Inf Bn in preparation for 26 Aust Inf Bde operations against Sattelberg.  
During that period A coy fought a bitter engagement and by a determined assault drove the enemy from strongly dug positions in thick bamboo 200 yards west of Kumawa; and fighting patrols 2/15 Aust Inf Bn maintained pressure on the enemy positions on the Sattelberg Road and cleared him from Sisi and Gurunkor. 79 enemy were killed in the Kumawa area during the period units of 20 Aust Inf Bde operated there.
4. 2/13 Aust Inf Bn from 18 Oct 43 to 21 Oct 43 held positions astride the coastal track on the south bank of Siki R in Heldsbach plantation during the period of the enemy counter offensive. Enemy parties had penetrated along the Siki R to its mouth and some elements made an attempt to cross the river and move south along the coast, but were repulsed with casualties by the forward posts of 2/13 Aust Inf Bn.  
The battalion then moved to a position on the Sattelberg Road and made contact with the enemy who had cut the road at 576648 and isolated 2/17 Aust Inf Bn at Jivevaneng. Two companies 2/13 Aust Inf Bn aided by pressure from 2/17 Aust Inf Bn side ultimately forced the enemy's withdrawal from the "road block" position on 3 Nov 43.
5. After being relieved by 26 Aust Inf Bde 3 - 5 Nov 43, 20 Aust Inf Bde, except 2/15 Aust Inf Bn, had no active part in the operations which resulted in the capture of Sattelberg by 26 Aust Inf Bde. 2/15 Aust Inf Bn, in patrol activity, maintained contact with the enemy on the Katika track during the first part of the period of 26 Aust Inf Bde operations. Later, the battalion advanced across the Song R on Nongara in support of the operations of 26 and 24 Aust Inf Bdes against the Wareo-Lakes area. After some fighting Nongara village was captured by 2/15 Aust Inf Bn on 2 Dec 43 and held in contact with the enemy, who was, by 8 Dec, pushed back beyond the track junction at 579717.

6. From 8 Dec 43 to 20 Dec 43, 20 Aust Inf Bde followed 4 Aust Inf Bde in its advance up the coast and passed through 4 Aust Inf Bde on 21 Dec 43 at Fortification Point.  
 Thereafter the Brigade led the pursuit of the enemy, and, on several occasions, was in contact with enemy rear parties; 2/17 Aust Inf Bn reached Memberiwa and Sio 13 - 15 Jan.  
 The Brigade was relieved by 8 Aust Inf Bde on 21 Jan, 2/17 Aust Inf Bn being then at Memberiwa - Sio; 2/15 Aust Inf Bn at Buri R and 2/13 Aust Inf Bn at Kalanooa.

7. Casualties for period 22 Sep 43 - 21 Jan 44 were:-

UNIT	KILLED		WOUNDED		MISSING		SICK	
	O	CRs	O	CRs	O	CRs	O	CRs
HQ 20 AUST INF BDE	-	-	1	4	-	-	10	47
SIGS 20 AUST INF BDE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
1 PL A COY 2/2 AUST HQ GUARD REGT	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	25
1 SEC 2/9 DIV PRO COY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
2/13 AUST INF BN	1	33	3	131	-	2	29	870
2/15 AUST INF BN	3	22	3	94	1	4	28	614
2/17 AUST INF BN	2	33	8	129	-	4	23	807
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>2406</b>

NOTE

Report on administrative lessons and lessons particularly relating to amphibious operations is being separately prepared.

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APPENDICES TO NARRATIVE

APPX "A" - 20 Aust Inf Bde G.O. No 6 with landing diagram and trace of objectives attached already forwarded.

APPX 'B' to 20 Aust Inf Bde  
Report on Operations - FINSCHHAFEN.

MOST SECRET  
29 Sep 43

20 AUST INF BDE OPERATION INSTRUCTION NO.

Ref Maps 1/25000      SATELBERG

Lt Col JOSHUA 2/43 Aust Inf Bn.

Copies to :-

Maj J R BROADBENT

Capt L MAELARN

1. Own and enemy dispositions west of SCARLET BEACH.  
See special I summary issued.
2. You will after landing relieve the troops known as SATELFORCE described in I summary. This relief to be completed as speedily as possible to enable 2/17 Bn to concentrate for operations against FINSCHHAFEN.
3. On completion of relief you will undertake the following tasks.
  - (a) Control of all routes leading into the beachhead area and HELDSBACH PLANTATION area from the North and NW and from SATELBERG area.
  - (b) Make recce and preparation for the capture of enemy position vicinity of GISI 571638 and SATELBERG. No attack to be made for this purpose without reference to me.
4. For these tasks you will have under command the following troops :-  
Two pls C Coy 2/1 Aust MG Bn  
9 pl P I B  
and in support  
C tp 2/12 Aust Fd Regt.  
Other arty support can be arranged in an emergency or for an attack.  
Two F O C's are reporting to you 30 Sep 43.
5. The control of the feature named NORTH HILL, immediately North of R SONG, now the responsibility of the M.L.O. will be taken over by you.
6. M.L.O. remains responsible for the close defence of SCARLET BEACH proper and has under command all troops within the beachhead area, other than yours.

(Sgd) W.J. WINDEYER Brig  
Comd 20 Aust Inf Bde

## REPORT ON OPERATIONS.

SEP 43 - JAN 44

### PART 11

#### TACTICAL METHODS AND LESSONS

##### ENEMY METHODS

###### ATTACK

1. This Brigade had experience of local counter attacks only. The following characteristics were noted, but enemy methods were not uniform.
2. Approach by night through thick vegetation to forming up areas close to our FDLs. Enemy skilful in moving silently by night. PIB often heard sounds of enemy before these were detected by white troops.
3. Actual assault sometimes made at night; more often about dusk. Sometimes silent, but often preceded by much noise, bugles and shouting.
4. Enemy counter attacks costly failures. Troops came on bunched, without any real plan and apparently knowing little of our dispositions. Having failed once, they would come again in the same way at the same place.
5. (a) Fire support largely absent and never well co-ordinated. Supporting weapons when used brought up by night or through jungle to close range. In one case a 37 mm gun was fired at ranges of 40 - 70 yards.  
(b) Artillery and mortars when used in support of attack relied on direct observation. No indirect fire used.
6. Positions very close up to our FDLs or astride our supply routes were at times gained by infiltration through jungle. Even if no further attack was made, the enemy was able from these positions to harass our positions by snipers, and he was not easily dislodged. His proximity to our positions gave him immunity from artillery and 3" mortar fire.
7. (a) Numerous shallow diggings along enemy line of approach appeared to indicate preparations to hold ground gained step by step even before contact made. They may however have been preparations for a fighting withdrawal.  
(b) Enemy approached by tracks or along streams. He did not make large movements across trackless country.

###### DEFENCE

8. (a) Enemy field works were constructed more for protection against our fire than for aggressive defence.  
(b) Pill boxes, when there was time for their construction, were very strong, made of coconut logs, proof against artillery and mortar fire.  
(c) Weapon pits were of the foxhole type - ground level with soil removed - connected by underground tunnels. A developed platoon position resembled a rabbit warren.

9. Concealment and camouflage good. Defences were often a few yards back from edge of vegetation. This did not impede enemy's view of advancing troops but made his positions difficult to locate. Thick bamboo provided an obstacle to infantry assault more formidable than barbed wire.
10. Siting (except in respect of protection and concealment) bad. Many pits on reverse slopes not sited for fire except at a few yards and many others largely "unfightable" because of heavy overhead cover.
11. (a) Defensive layout generally unco-ordinated and with little appreciation of the value of enfilade fire.  
 (b) Positions seldom well sited for all round defence. Primary object apparently to cover track.  
 (c) Positions often in some depth along track but not usually extending very far on either side of track.
12. Inland positions sited to control a track were normally placed where the track ran along a ridge. The site chosen was usually a narrow saddle where tributary gullies on either side made outflanking movements difficult. A standard layout was: a MMG to fire down the track and a LMG on each side able to fire down the gully; with usually one or two sentries up to 100 yards in front of the main position. The sentries were rarely alert and were usually dealt with by our forward scouts. But shooting them alarmed the post.
13. In several instances a fence made of a few strands of signal cable or pieces of light bamboo was erected across the track a short distance in front of an enemy post. The fence was not often extended beyond the edges of the track and was therefore no real obstacle. The purpose of these barriers was not clear. Probably they were intended to cause our forward scouts to pause so that they could be easily shot.
14. Defences found in places on the coast, sited to protect beaches, were more solidly constructed than most of those inland and were of the pillbox "bunker" type e.g. those at Scarlet Beach. They were often better sited than those inland but mainly for frontal fire. The advantages of fire from headlands seems to have been little appreciated.
15. (a) Fire was withheld until attack reached close quarters. It was difficult to estimate the strength or extent of enemy positions by drawing their fire. For example, when one position near Kumawa was attacked it was found to be occupied by a company with several automatics; yet no more than three rifles and one LMG had fired from it in retaliation to our fire over some days.  
 (b) This control of ammunition expenditure may have resulted as much from shortage of supplies as from policy. Earlier, at Finschhafen the enemy had not been so sparing in his use of LMGs.
16. Trip wires and booby traps rarely used.
17. (a) Anti tank mines laid on or beside tracks in some places. These were sometimes effective, particularly when laid in packets, in damaging tracks of tanks and tractors; but in general their

results were insignificant.

- (b) No effective anti-tank obstacles were constructed, although in places the country gave opportunities.
18. (a) In defensive positions enemy moves much by night in spite of the difficulties of the ground and jungle.
- (b) Tracks in rear of enemy FDLs were used freely by day with little provision for the protection of working and foraging parties, who were often unarmed. This carelessness gave great opportunities to our patrols.
19. Our forward scouts were always fired on. No instances occurred in this Brigade of the forward scout being allowed to pass to permit ambush of main party.
20. When our leading scout was hit his body was invariably covered by fire. Attempts to rescue wounded or remove dead often resulted in further casualties.
21. (a) When confronted by a vigorous and swift assault, particularly from a flank and after artillery and mortar bombardment the enemy broke in panic and fled.
- (b) For example, he ran from very strongly constructed defences at Scarlet Beach, on the high ground north of the Bumi River, near Kakakog and at Kumawa. These positions could have been longer held by a more determined enemy and only captured at much greater cost.
- (c) Our losses in fighting at close quarters were extremely small compared with his. He is demoralised by artillery and mortar fire and by really close fighting with sub-machine gun, grenade and bayonet.

#### OUR METHODS AND LESSONS LEARNT

##### GENERAL

22. The main lessons appear from the following paragraphs.
23. Well trained and lightly equipped infantry in adequate numbers form the first requirement in a jungle campaign.
24. Our troops properly trained and resolutely led are more than a match for the Japanese either in the jungle or in the open.
25. **Training is essential.** The training for amphibious and jungle warfare and the rehearsals on the Mainland and at Milne Bay, were on sound lines.
26. There is no mystery in jungle fighting. Success in battle there, as elsewhere, depends on the moral qualities of determined leaders and resolute, confident and disciplined men.
27. Operations in the jungle demand the correct application of normal principles of war - not any special tactics or "drills".
28. It is as possible in the jungle, as elsewhere, to give infantry full aid of supporting arms; and they should have it from the air, artillery, tanks.
29. Commanders must beware of overestimating the tactical strength of their dispositions. There are two dangers:-
- (a) In close country a unit or sub-unit usually has complete control of less ground than in open country.- Distances between its components (sections, platoons or companies) are

less, as the gaps cannot be so readily controlled by observed fire. But circles drawn on maps to indicate dispositions often cover more than the small areas effectively held - and can be misleading.

- (b) With restricted fields of fire it is numbers of fighting men which count, not the forms of their organisation. A company reduced to the fighting strength of a platoon - (as was at times the case) - cannot hold the same ground as a company at full strength. To continue to describe it as a company can be misleading.

30. Although the ground which can be effectively held by a unit or sub-unit is less in the jungle than in open country, a continuous front is not essential. A large area can be controlled by a limited force with its units holding main tracks. Large stretches of unoccupied jungle must exist. Penetration between our positions will always be possible. It need not be serious provided:-

- (a) The garrison of each position holds its ground and has adequate water, food and ammunition to hold out in isolation for several days.
- (b) Each locality into which it is essential there should be no infiltration at all (e.g. dumps, installations, HQ areas etc) is occupied by a sufficient number of men to prevent this.
- (c) Each body placed to control a route is strong enough to do so. Control of a track normally demands not less than a full company, preferably more; A few strong positions from which offensive patrols operate are better than many small detachments which are liable to be defeated in detail.
- (d) Adequate local and general reserves are maintained.

31. In the jungle difficulties of land communications make greater the restrictions on tactical mobility imposed by considerations of supply and transport.

32. Mobility is increased if in planning the 'g' side of operations consideration is given to:-

- (a) An adequate supply from the outset of native porters. They are essential as "unit first line transport" in many types of jungle country. In their absence the effective fighting strength of the force will be tremendously depleted by troops employed in portage.
- (b) Provision of craft and an organisation similar to that of the American E B & S Bn. In operations along a coast the provision of some craft, particularly "chukws" under command of forward units as their own first line transport, was invaluable.
- (c) Sufficient engineers, pioneers and heavy mechanical equipment rapidly to make all weather roads.
- (d) An increasing supply of jeeps available <sup>to infantry</sup> ~~infantry~~ battalions. As roads develop, units can economically use an increasing amount of MT.



ATTACK

33. (a) Enemy positions can be captured in two ways:-

- (i) Actual assault by infantry.
- (ii) Pressure by small arms fire from close range.

Assault Except in the case of rear parties covering his retreat, the enemy was never dislodged by artillery fire alone.

34. Assault

- (a) On several occasions strong positions were gained by assault by a company or more. This proved possible through jungle; but not if it was heavily entangled or mainly composed of bamboo cane.
- (b) Artillery support should be used to the maximum. Several concentrations at intervals before the attack, puts the enemy deep in his holes; when no attack follows he becomes unalert. A concentration can then be fired in support of actual attack without loss of surprise.
- (c) Silent approach to and surprise attack from flank were most effective. In one such approach PIB were used to warn of enemy listening posts. This ensured that flank approach went wide enough to avoid detection. PIB were left at forming up place and did not participate in actual assault.
- (d) On two occasions very successful surprise attacks by one company were made through heavy undergrowth up very steep slopes on the flank of enemy positions. These positions were near the tops of the slopes and sited to control ground on that level or higher. The enemy was unable to depress his automatics from his pits to engage our troops until they were right on top of him.
- (e) In the final assault a dash with all weapons in use Owen gun, bren firing from the hip, grenades and bayonets and with our troops all shouting, demoralised the enemy.

35. Close Pressure

- (a) When, owing to thick bamboo cane or special difficulties of terrain, it was not possible to carry the position by assault, the enemy always withdrew after a period of pressure of small arms fire at close range.
- (b) In several places near Jivevenang and Kumasa positions were held for several days less than 50 yards and sometimes as close as 10 yards from the enemy. In every case the enemy ultimately withdrew by night, usually on the third night.
- (c) But fire alone, does not dislodge the enemy. He must be made to feel the threat of us steadily pressing in upon him.
- (d) To create this impression and to get close enough to the enemy, there must be steady infiltration by small parties to closer range or attacks with very limited objectives. (e.g. 10 yards in very close country).

- (e) Simultaneous movement by patrols threatening the enemy's rear and supply route makes him apprehensive and more ready to withdraw.
- (f) Small arms pressure to be effective demands great expenditure of ammunition. Much harassing fire from MMGs at very close range is particularly effective. The enemy then seems to prefer tunnelling to retaliation. In one position which we captured after a period of close pressure Japs were found at the bottom of their holes firing straight up in the air terrified to put more than their rifles above ground.

36.

- (a) Ground gained, should be held however small the gain. On three occasions attacks which at the end of the day seemed have gained part only of their objectives were found in the morning to have been completely effective as the enemy had withdrawn from the whole of his positions.
- (b) As the enemy is never prepared to surrender he has only two alternatives other than death when he feels his position untenable. He can break and run or he can sneak away by night. In attacking, our troops should all realise that if they resolutely hold gains however small and keep up pressure on the enemy, then, if he does not do the former, he will in time do the latter.

37.

When use of artillery and 3" mortars is restricted by our forward troops being too close upon the enemy, high expenditure of grenades and 2" mortar bombs must be anticipated.

38.

Advance Guard Against Enemy Heavy Gunners.

- (a) Operations of this kind were generally orthodox during the pursuit phase of the campaign.
- (b) At this stage the enemy could often be driven from his positions by artillery fire alone.
- (c) He did not, as we fighting a delaying action would have done, held the high ground on the flank of the coastal track and take advantage of the long fields of fire offered by extensive patches of kunai. He occupied narrow positions astride the track a few yards in from the edge of the timber where the track passed from kunai into patches of jungle and held his fire until the leading elements of the vanguard were close upon him.
- (d) In these conditions it was found best after contact was made to withdraw the vanguard to a safe distance and shell the area of the enemy position even if its extent was not fully known. And in some cases tanks were brought into action.
- (e) These methods often caused the enemy to go, without it being necessary to commit infantry to an attack.

39.

Artillery and 3" mortar FOCs well forward are essential in all offensive operations. In rapid advances, a 46 set was better than cable.

REFERENCE

40.

This Brigade had experience of defensive operations on two occasions; once for a short period at Kumawa, and more notably

when one battalion was close pressed by the enemy for three weeks when holding extensive positions near Jivevenang.

41. When a unit is forced on the defensive in the jungle, positive steps must be taken to prevent the development of a "cut off", "surrounded" or "tight perimeter" complex.
42. (a) When there is any risk of a unit's normal supply route being interrupted by the enemy adequate reserves of ammunition and supplies should be in its posts.
- (b) But it is important to make resort to these reserves for any length of time, unnecessary. Men who are exoending their reserves because normal access has been cut off feel besieged. If an alternative route is opened and regular supply and evacuation resumed their confidence is increased.
43. (a) On occasions normal communications were cut by enemy parties establishing themselves across the track in rear of our positions and at the same time the enemy was established on our flanks. But no case occurred of a unit being literally surrounded; and it is thought that this is not very likely to occur.
- (b) When troops are apparently "cut off" aggressive patrolling is especially important. Morale is stimulated; the enemy's limits are discovered; new round about routes into our own positions are found; and it is realised that the "siege" is over.
44. When attacked and cut off the first determination of all commanders and troops in the jungle as elsewhere must be to yield no ground.
45. (a) The common use of the word "perimeter" in jungle operations causes misconceptions which may prove dangerous.
46. (a) This term is generally taken to mean a closely manned, more or less circular area astride a track in which a unit or sub-unit bivouacs for the night when it is moving in contact or possible contact with the enemy.
- (b) But there is some tendency to regard such perimeters not as expedients for the security of a force temporarily bivouaced during mobile operations but as normal dispositions for a defensive battle in the jungle.
47. The disadvantages of close perimeter defences are:
- (a) They tend to limit the ground held regardless of its tactical significance.
- (b) By limiting the ground held, they increase the risk of the force being in fact really surrounded and they restrict the opportunities for aggressive patrolling.
- (c) They tend to be overcrowded and thus vulnerable to enemy heavy weapons and unsatisfactory for hygiene and administrative reasons.

(d) They are bad for morale, as they tend to be essentially passive and to enhance the "cut off" feeling.

48. Wherever possible vegetation should be cleared to provide extensive fields, not merely lanes, of view and fire. Bulldozers will do this speedily; but if they cannot be used much can be done with machetes and axes to clear all light growth.

49. (a) This policy prevents the enemy getting so close to our positions that he cannot be safely engaged by artillery and mortars.

(b) It also enables a greater area to be held as ground between defended localities can be effectively covered by observed fire.

50. This policy of clearing has however been criticised. It is said that it foregoes the advantages of concealment and surprise which make the enemy formidable in defence in the jungle.

51. But this criticism is thought to be unsound because:-

(a) The advantages outweigh the alleged disadvantages, which can be reduced to a minimum by correct siting of the clearings.

(b) The criticism often involves a confusion between a standing patrol or ambush position and a unit defended area.

(c) The cutting of fields of fire which attackers must cross need not seriously prejudice concealment of actual firing positions.

(d) The enemy's methods of mass attack render him particularly vulnerable when he has to cross open ground.

(e) The object in a defensive battle is to kill the enemy who attacks, not to hide from him. Troops who prepare their positions with this object in mind will fight the attack in the right spirit.

52. The thicker the jungle in front of our position the more important it is that it be immediately explored. Thick growth obscures the conformation of the ground. Small rises and reentrants are not apparent. But their existence must be discovered if our weapons are to be sited to the best advantage. For example, it has been said of the MMG that it clears its own fire lane. That in a sense is true; but it cannot clear a fire lane through a bank.

53. (a) The selection of ground to be held in defence in jungle is dictated by the same considerations as elsewhere with emphasis on the following matters.

(b) The main approaches are tracks, which usually

follow ridges and sometimes creek and river beds in their lower reaches.

- (c) The tactical value of high ground is diminished if it is in thick jungle as it offers no better observation than low ground. A hill feature on the flank of a track gives little control of the track if nothing can be seen from it.
- (d) The best places for controlling a track are where it follows a knife edge ridge.
- (e) Water is often difficult to obtain in the mountains. But provision should be made for holding a water point within every defended position. Springs must be looked for and soaks constructed as soon as the position is occupied. Some reserve of water in containers should be maintained in each post.

#### PATROLS

- 54. (a) In general patrols should be of not less than one platoon strength.
- (b) It is not easy for any white patrol however small moving in jungle to detect the presence of concealed enemy without being itself seen. The reason for keeping reconnaissance patrols small "to see without being seen", may often therefore give way to a policy of "safety in numbers".
- 55. The best composition for a patrol was found to be one platoon with attached, a small group - three or four men - of PIB if available, one or two signalmen with light cable, and artillery and (depending on the range) 3" mortar FCOs. The keener senses of the PIB made them invaluable when working with the forward scouts to give warning of the enemy.
- 56. Ground found free of enemy by patrols cannot be presumed to remain so. If it is of tactical importance that it be held it should be occupied at once and further troops sent forward to reinforce the patrol if necessary.
- 57. (a) The object of a patrol must be definite and quite clear to the leader before he starts. Indefinite missions are of no more value in the jungle than elsewhere.
- (b) In particular, if a patrol is to go to a particular place, it must be clear whether if it meets opposition on the track it is to remain and engage the enemy there, or return, or break off contact and seek to reach its original objective by another route.
- 58. Patrol leaders must not be deterred from their object by contact with the enemy. As a patrol is to return in due time to its base there is often a tendency to break off contact and return after an initial exchange of shots.

Information and opportunities can be lost by so doing.

59. Patrols move slowly in close country and are at times out for two days or more. Line communications should normally be maintained, except in the case of long patrols.

NIGHT OPERATIONS.

60. (a) We never moved by night; but the enemy at times did.  
(b) Movement by night in jungle is difficult; and because of the opportunities of concealed approach by day is of much less value than in open country.  
(c) Any large scale night operations are not recommended. But small parties might perhaps use night for placing ambushes or snipers for action at first light. This was not attempted. It might not be practicable in thick jungle but might be done in coconut plantations or kunai.

REPORT ON OPERATIONS

SEP 43 - JAN 44

PART III

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

ENEMY WEAPONS

1. Enemy weapons generally much inferior to ours. No occasion reported of use by our troops of enemy weapons in preference to own.
2. (a) "89" grenade (fired from discharger) - good blast and fragmentation effect severe.  
(b) "91" grenade hand, (7 sec fuse) not very effective, found occasionally tied in groups of 6 with pins removed and buried as booby traps or mines or along tracks.  
(c) "97" grenade hand, (4 sec fuse) most commonly used; very poor effect.
3. 81 mm mortar - effective with both heavy and light bombs.
4. 90 mm mortar - very effective. Accurately used. Unsuited for manhandling and scarcely an infantry weapon.
5. 70 mm battalion gun - type 92. Mortar-like report and apparently high trajectory made it difficult to locate. Often mistaken for mortar fire. Sometimes effectively employed at very close point blank range.
6. Enemy automatics of various types were not regarded as equal to ours of comparable calibre. In Finsehafen many Lewis guns were used by enemy.

Signal Equipment

7. (a) Wireless apparently little used. Sets light and portable.  
(b) Telephones, cable and cable gear all very good, light, durable and largely waterproof.

OWN EQUIPMENT

Machine

8. Machine

- (a) Of great value.
- (b) Sustained fire at close ranges in jungle often a major factor both in holding our positions and in dislodging the enemy.
- (c) During operations in open country most effective in normal roles. Observation of fire difficult in kunai growing on coral. Belts prepared for registration by insertion of limited amount of tracer were of value.
- (d) A light weight tripod with legs detachable for carrying would be an advantage.

9. 3-in Mortars

- (a) Very valuable. But there were marked variations in different batches of propellant charges. This limited the use of mortars for very close support.

- (b) (i) Ammunition supply must always be a constant problem because of its weight.
- (ii) It should be a general rule for all commanders not to use mortars where artillery can be used.
- (c) The present establishment of 8 mortars per battalion is more than can be employed in mobile jungle operations owing to the weight both of the mortar and ammunition.
- (d) A satisfactory solution is probably to leave the existing establishment unchanged, but as circumstances require to cut down the number of pieces to be actually carried leaving others in a divisional dump.
- (e) There should, however, be no decrease in the strength of the mortar platoon which in the campaign needs its full numbers for carrying four mortars and ammunition only.
- (f) The waxed cartons were not completely satisfactory. A light metal container to carry 2 bombs has been suggested.

10. 2-in Mortar

- (a) Most units consider most useful.
- (b) Smoke and flare ammunition proved invaluable for signals and to locate positions of sub-units.

11. Boys Rifle

- (a) Not in fact carried as no use anticipated and never in fact needed.
- (b) Reduction of scale to one per company is recommended.

12. 2 in Mk/A Gun

- (a) Not in fact used except sited for protection initial beach-head.
- (b) American 37mm gun more suitable if an infantry Mk/A gun is required.

13. REC

Very satisfactory - tripod mounting unnecessary and not in fact carried.

14. SMG

- (a) Very satisfactory.
- (b) Detailed report on certain technical modifications has been separately submitted - the principal suggestion is to place the change lever on the opposite side to prevent rubbing against the body.
- (c) Tendency to bulged barrel was noted.
- (d) It is strongly recommended that a percentage (up to 50%) be fitted with a silencer for patrol work. This would prevent our shooting of enemy scouts and listening posts giving the alarm.

15. Mk Grenade

- (a) Wet weather causes deterioration.



- (b) A waxed or cellophane envelope is recommended.

16. Signal Equipment

- (a) Our equipment has many defects, as in its essentials it is not designed for jungle warfare.
- (b) The disadvantages of our standard equipment were only partly overcome by great labours by brigade and battalion signalmen and the constant supplementing of their numbers by other soldiers.

The only alleviation came from the use of some American equipment issued and captured equipment.

17. The main requirements are:-

- (a) Light durable cable.
- (b) 1/3 mile drums (light weight). The present mile drums are far too heavy.
- (c) Light pack layer and re-winder.
- (d) Light waterproof telephone combination buzzer and magneto type.
- (e) Adequate supply spare telephone parts in waterproof box.
- (f) SCR 536B (walkie talkie) - (scale at least 32 per battalion recommended or one per platoon with adequate reserve.
- (g) W/T sets No 46 (8 per battalion recommended).

18. Wireless

- (a) (i) SCR 536B of great use. Ranges up to 2800 yards obtained in open country and up to 500 in jungle.
- (ii) It requires to be waterproofed and the provision of a light rubber bag in which to carry it would be an advantage. A stronger protective cap for the aerial and stronger microphone covers also recommended.
- (b) No 46 set gave very good performance. In dense country its range was restricted. In open country up to 8 miles was reported.
- (c) No 11 set reliable - but heavy for infantry battalion use. Suggest replacement by No 46 set or set of slightly greater range.
- (d) No 108 Set Mk 11 most/satisfactory. No experience of No 108 Mk 111.

19. (a) D (V) telephones and handsets satisfactory in performance but too heavy, affected by wet and impossible to waterproof.

A waterproof key (as on walkie talkie) is recommended.

- (b) Spare microphone capsules need to be readily available.
- (c) Switchboards are especially affected by wet conditions. A light board (6 line) factory waterproofed, is recommended.

GENERAL

20. MT

- (a) Jeeps admirable and indispensable. Recommendations for MT scale for units separately communicated.
- (b) Restoration of a transport platoon (including mechanic) to establishment of infantry battalion very strongly recommended, if MT to be used to best advantage and adequately maintained.

21. Water Containers

- (a) A liberal issue required.
- (b) Tins often become unserviceable.
- (c) Canvas water bags square type desirable in addition to tins.

22. SAA Bandoliers

Owing to these rotting in damp conditions stronger material is recommended.

23. Barbers' Tools

- (a) Issue on scale of 5 complete sets per infantry battalion is recommended.
- (b) The importance of keeping men shaved and barbered in tropical conditions cannot be overemphasised.

24. Steel Helmets

Retention is recommended. Some men feel more confident when wearing them, but men need not be required to carry them during a campaign if they do not desire to do so.

25. Hats

- (a) Hat KP the best head dress for Australian troops anywhere, both on sentimental and utility grounds.
- (b) Proposed ventilated hat an improvement but needs to be provided with hooks for chin strap and for turning up at side.
- (c) No need has been found for proposed jungle beret.