

AWM52
2nd Australian Imperial Force and
Commonwealth Military Forces unit war
diaries, 1939-45 War

Item number: 8/3/78

39 Infantry Battalion

January - July 1943

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form 118
(adap)

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PAGE 1.

Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From Jan. 1st. '43 To 3 Jan '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
	1 Jan '43		<p>Advance party of American unit arrived.</p> <p>Two patrols were sent out, one on the right and the other on the left of the track leading to ENEMY L. of C. Although the ground was much drier in these areas than on the track itself it was found that only very slow progress could be made as the undergrowth was very dense. No ENEMY were seen by either patrol.</p>	
	2 Jan '43		<p>At 0700 hrs Lieut McCLEAN with a composite pl. left to relieve 36 Bn tps who were required to proceed to GONA for garrison duties.</p> <p>Relieving tps arrived during the morning and the relief with the exception of standing patrols was complete by 1200 hrs. Just prior to its relief the standing patrol withdrew before any ENEMY patrol. Lieut. MOORE with a stronger patrol was promptly sent to restore the posn. following which the relief of standing patrols was completed. About this time there was some brisk S A fire by the relief tps within the perimeter. This may have been provoked by a sniper.</p> <p>The Bn with the exception of 110ns left as guide moved off at 1500 hrs and marched back to HQ 30 AUST INF BDE no longer being u/c 21 Aust Inf Bde. Bivouacked in an area fwd of 30 bde. Hq. At this stage there was no shelter and heavy rain fell throughout the night.</p>	
	3 Jan '43		<p>The Bn was organised into three gps. of approx. strength of fifty each, the Comds. being Capt. BIDSTROP, Capt. GILMORE and Capt. SEWARD. The task allotted to the unit was to relieve elements of 53/55 Bn and hold a posn in the line between an American force and 49 Aust Inf Bn. Capt GILMORE was detailed to carry out the first relief while Capt. SEWARD was to move to a reserve posn, Capt. BIDSTROP remaining in the HQ area. After twenty four hrs. Capt. BIDSTROP was to relieve Capt GILMORE who would come back to reserve posn, Capt SEWARD returning to HQ.</p>	

R. Honner Lt. Col.
Comd. 39 Aust Inf. Bn.

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Date and Time.—From 3 Jan '43. To 11 Jan '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
			This system of reliefs was to continue automatically. Lieut. McClean's party was relieved by 2/7 Cav. at 1800 hrs and returned to the unit.	
	4 Jan '43		The relief was carried out after dark. Capt GILMORE reporting the probable killing of four ENEMY.	
	5 Jan '43		Owing to evacuations through sickness it was found necessary to divide the Bn into two gps. instead of three. Each gp. to have 48 hrs. in the line and 48 in reserve. Capt. GILMORE therefore relieved Capt. BIDSTROP at 2000 hrs. The probable number of ENEMY killed was twelve.	
	6 Jan '43		News received that Capt. N.M.SYMRINGTON had been awarded the M.C. as a result of his action in KOKODA operation.	
	8 Jan '43		Relief carried out as arranged at 2000 hrs.	
	8 Jan '43		Orders that Bn was to move back to guard the guns and would be relieved by 2/12 Aust Inf Bn were received. Adv. party of 2/12 Bn arrived and 39 Bn adv party moved to new posn.	
	9 Jan '43		Bn. less Capt BIDSTROP'S party moved to new posn. Capt. BIDSTROP was relieved at 2000 hrs and with his gp. spent the night at reserve posn. I.O. remained at 2/12 Bn HQ	
	10 Jan '43		Capt. BIDSTROP moved back to guns and tps were disposed for protection as shown in appx. Capt Kaines arrived from HQNGF and relieved Capt SHERA as RMO, latter being evacuated sick.	
	11 Jan '43		I.O. returned to unit. The Bn remained in this area from this date until 16 Jan.	

R. Honner Lt.-col.
Comd. 39 Aust Inf. Bn.

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From 16 Jan '43 To 23 Jan '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
	16 Jan '43		Bn marched to COCONUT GROVE on track to CAPE KILLERTON with orders to guard 18 Bde supply dump (found on arrival to be non-existent) (b) providing escorts for native carriers and Jeeps supplying 18 Bde and (c) to guard native camp. Owing to extreme depletion of the unit, effective performance of these duties was very difficult.	
	17 Jan '43		2/7 Aust Cav. Regt also greatly below strength arrived to assist in the tasks mentioned above. The coordination of duties carried out by both units became the responsibility of CO 39 Aust Inf Bn. Establishment of 18 Bde Supply dump was commenced. Heavy rain during the night 17/18 Jan.	
	18 Jan '43		2/7 Aust Cav Regt were withdrawn from the area for duty elsewhere. The Bn then resumed entire responsibility and continued with routine duties involved until 23 Jan '43.	
	22 Jan 43		ENEMY resistance at HUGGINS ROAD BLOCK having come to an end, fugitive JAPANESE tps making their way in the general direction of GONA during night 20/21 Jan made a new track crossing our L of C approx 1 mile in rear of our posn. The appearance of this track suggested that one hundred or more tps had used it. Six stragglers were found and killed near our L of C having refused to surrender.	
	23 Jan '43		The Bn marched out of the area to SOPUTA area with a strength of 7 Off. and 25 ORs. Prior to moving off two ENEMY fugitives were discovered in the camp area. One was killed and one escaped. This proved to be the unit's last contact with the ENEMY during the PAPUAN CAMPAIGN. On arrival in the SOPUTA area the 30 bde comprising the remnants of 39 Aust Inf Bn 49 Aust Inf Bn and 2/7 Aust Cav Regt (temporarily u/c/) were paraded and	

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From Jan 23, '43 To Jan 31, '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
			addressed by Maj. Gen G.A. VASEY (Comd. 7 Aust Div) He thanked all the ranks for the tasks they had done while u/c 7 Aust Div and congratulated them on the manner in which they had done it.	
	24 Jan '43		At 0400 hrs the Bn moved out from SOPUTA leading 30 Bde in march to DOBUDURA arriving at 0900 hrs. As planes were not available for continuation of the journey to MORESBY area, unit bivouacked in the vicinity of the landing ground.	
	25 Jan '43		All ranks were at the emplaning point at 0730 hrs and during the morning were flown to WARDS DROME (MORESBY area). MT met the planes and moved personnel to the rest camp at DONA-DABU. This portion of the unit remained resting in this area until the end of the month. During this period personnel returning from hospital were sent to the B ech. area at 17-mile from where they went on daily route marches. All personnel were placed on 72 hrs. notice for embarkation for Australia.	

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From 1 Feb '43 To 28 Feb 43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
			The Bn remained in the same dispositions as at the end of Jan. till 13 Feb. Similarly the 72 hrs. embarkation was still in force. During this period Records &c. were packed ready for shipment and ordnance stores were returned.	
	13 Feb '43		Maj. Gen A.S.ALLEN (Comd. 6 Aust Div) visited DONADABU and informed the CO that the Bn would stand by in readiness for operations in the WAU area in case further tps were required before the arrival of reinforcements from Australia. Demands were to be made on Ordnance for such arms and equipment as might be necessary. Intensive trng. would be put into operation at once.	
	15 Feb '43		The CO left DONADABU for 17 Mile to make initial arrangements for implementing the above orders.	
	16 Feb '43		All ranks were concentrated at 17 mile. As there were insufficient personnel for full Bn establishment the unit was organised in five rifle coys. each of two pls. and Hq Coy composed of Sig. Pl Mortar pl, and Admin, Pl. These coys. were commanded by MAJ. A.J.ANDERSON (HQ COY), Capt. N.M.SYINGTON (A coy) Lieut A.G.GARLAND (B coy) Capt M.S.SEWARD (C Coy) and Lieut. D.I.H.McCLEAN (D coy)	
			Remainder of the month was spent in intensive tng and re-equipping. Web equipment and clothing were dyed green. Two inspections, one by Lt.Gen SIR IVAN MCKAY(Comd N.G.Force) and one by Maj. Gen.CA.CLOWES (Comd.11Aust Div) during normal tng. R.C.church parades were held within the unit and members of other Denominations attended 30 bde Church Pdes on Sun 21 and 28 Feb.	

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Comd 39 Aust Inf. Bn.

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From March '43. To 16 Mar '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
			XXXXXXXXXX The tng. programme commenced on 17 Feb was con- tinued until 11 Mar.	
	10 Mar '43		The battle station to be occupied by the Bn in the event of attempted ENEMY invasion of the MORESBY area were handed over to 9 Aust Inf Bn. These posns were in the PYRAMID POINT area and were prepared by the Bn prior to moving to GONA.	
	11 Mar '43		Orders were received at 1400 hrs. to stand by for embark- ation for Australia. No movement took place before 1500 hrs. Further tps having landed from Australia withing the preceding few days the necessity for the unit acting as reinforcements in the WAU area was removed.	
	12 Mar. '43		All personnel with the exception of a small rear party ✓ moved in MT at 0200 hrs for PORT MORESBY and embarked in HT "DUNTROON" HQ 30 Aust Inf Bde and 49 Aust Inf Bn also embarked in the vessel which sailed at 0730 hrs.	
	13 Mar '43		H.T. DUNTROON anchored off CAIRNS at 1900 hrs and remained at the anchorage throughout the night.	
	14 Mar '43		Bn tps disembarked at 0900 hrs and immediately entrained for WANDECLA (ATHERTON TABLELANDS). The last trps arrived by 1900hrs.	
	15 Mar '43		Advice was received that the Bn was now a part of 6Aust Div and that 30 Aust Inf Bde would consist of 3/22 Aust Inf Bn, 39 Aust Inf Bn, and 49 Aust Inf Bn) The day was spent in arranging the camp area. This in- volved the clearing of numbers of heavy logs and dead trees and was continued until 25 Mar '43.	
	16 Mar '43		C0 (lt. Col R HONNER) left to take his home leave.	

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Comd. 39 Aust Inf. Bn.

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From 18 Mar '43 To _____

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
			<p>The Bde Comd (Brig. S.H.W.C.PORTER) addressed tps at a Bde parade, congratulating them on the part taken in the recent Papuan campaign and announcing the inclusion of the Bde in 6 Aust Div. He also formally welcomed the 3/22 Bn to the Bde. Following the parade the Bns marched past and Bde Comd took the salute.</p>	
	19 Mar '43		<p>There was a mobile picture show in the Bde area in the evening.</p>	
	25 Mar '43		<p>All personnel with the exception of Lieut. CONNOLLY and twenty ORs to xxxxxxxxxx to act as rear party, entrained at WANDECLA for home leave, arriving in BRISBANE on 28 Mar and leaving again for SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE. The latter was reached on April 4th.</p> <p>During the absence of the main body of the Bn. the rear party continued with clearing of camp area, construction of miniature rifle range &c.</p>	

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn

Date and Time.—From April '43. To MAY '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
			At the beginning of the month the main body of the Bn was at Leave and Transit Depot BRISBANE en route for home leave. The majority were booked for VICTORIA.	
	2 Apr. '43		Left BRISBANE.	
	3 Apr '43		Arrived SYDNEY and after spending five hrs at LTD resumed journey.	
	4 Apr '43		Arrived MELBOURNE approx 1800 hrs.	
	18 ^A pr '43		Some personnel whose homes were in Q'ld and N.S.W. having returned from leave the rear Party left for their homes.	
	25 Apr '43		CO returned from leave. Personnel in camp during the month were mainly employed in improving the area.	
	2 May '43		Adj and 180 tps returned from leave.	
	9 May '43		Adj evacuated to 2/2/ AGH for treatment for malaria.	
	19 May '43		CO evacuated to 2/2/ AGH for treatment for Malaria.	
	23 May '43		Adj returned to unit.	
	25 May '43		CME (Militia) personnel who had not volunteered for service with AIF were marched out to a Drafting Depot. The main occupation of tps. during the month was the construction of the obstacle courses, rangest etc., in tng. areas with a limited amount of weapon tng.	

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn.

Date and Time.—From 2 June '43 To 23 June '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
	2 June '43		No 1 Coy marched to Bn Open Trg. Area for three days fieldcraft training.	
	7 June '43		No 2 Coy fired 30 yards Range Practices.	
	8 June '43		No 1 Coy marched to Bn Open Trg Area for three days fieldcraft training and individual field firing.	
	9 June '43		No 2 Coy fired Rifle Classification Practices on Bde Range.	
	10 June '43		No 2 Coy fired LMG Classification Practices on Bde Range.	
	11 June '43		No 1 Coy fired LMG Classification Practices on Bde Range.	
	12 June '43		No 1 Coy refired Practices on Bde Range.	
	14 June '43		No 1 Coy commenced section training. No 2 Coy commenced fieldcraft training. No 3 Coy commenced individual training.	
	16 June '43		No 1 Coy marched to Jungle Trg. Area for three days section training in jungle. No 2 Coy marched to Open Trg. Area for three days individual field firing and fieldcraft.	
	19 June '43		No 2 Coy refired 30 yard Range Practices.	
	21 June '43		No 1 Coy marched to open Trg Area for three days section training	
	23 June '43		No 2 Coy marched to Open Trg Area for three days fieldcraft training.	

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn.

Date and Time.—From 23 June '43 To 28 June '43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
	23 June '43		No 3 Coy fired 30 yard Range Practices.	
	24 June '43		C.O., Coy Comds, Adjts., I.O., Q.M., and Sigs took part in skeleton brigade exercise finishing on 26 June.	
	26 June '43		Nos 1 & 2 Coys refired 30 yard Range Practices.	
	28 June '43		No 1 Coy marched to Open Trg Area for three days sec. trg, largely sec. field firing. No 2 Coy commenced section trg. No 3 Coy commenced fieldcraft trg.	

R. Honner Lt Col.
Comd. 39 Aust Inf Bn.

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Unit 39 Aust Inf Bn.

Date and Time.—From 1 July'43

To 3 July'43

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
	1 July'43		No 2 Coy commenced section training in jungle. Officers' Mess was formally opened. 37 men members of the mess were present, eight were absent at schools and several in hospital.
	3 July'43	0945	39 Bn. marched on 30 Bde parade addressed by Lt-Gen. Morshead who announced the disbandment of 30 Bde and the amalgamation of its units with 2/1, 2/2, 2/3, and 2/4 Bns. 30 Bde marched past Lt-Gen Morshead. C.O. addressed the Bn. for the last time. 39 Bn. marched to 2/2 Bn. 2/2 Bn. band met it on the road and played it in through 2/2 Bn. lines to the Bn. parade ground where C.O. handed the Bn. over to Capt. Baird, 2/2 Bn.
		1030	
		1115	
		1315	

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