

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

**Item number: 8/2/24**

**24 Infantry Brigade**  
**Essays, Lae & Finschhafen 1943**

FINSCHHAVEN

-----dedicated to

the men who died, their efforts, their sacrifices, which made possible our success.

-----ooOoo-----

REMEMBER --

"They shall not <sup>G</sup>grow old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
We shall remember them."

-----ooOoo-----

VICTOR GRINTELL, CPL.

FINSCHHAVEN.

DEDICATED To the men who died, their efforts, their sacrifices made possible our success.

oOo6

REMEMBER.

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o o

16 Sept, 43, dawned cloudy and uncertain, we were not interested in the weather, all were filled with a feeling of tense expectancy---the morning dragged on---midday the news broke LAE had fallen.  
W Weary troops who had not rested since the morning of the memorable 4th, the beginning of the fifth year of the war, and the beginning of jungle warfare for men who for so long had known no other than the arid windswept desert, with its miles of front-rumbling tanks manoeuvring in battle, heavy artillery barrages, acres of minefields--tangles of donnett wire, all enveloped in swirling columns of dust, there war began with the night, here in New Guinea it ceased when the sun went down, this was something new here men fought man against man, individualism was asked for and expected.

LAE was ours, the battle was over, speculation rife, what would happen now? Would we rest or would we carry the fight to a ~~hard~~ hard-pressed enemy, the smoke of rumour began to circulate, conjecture was at its best, the 20 Bde. would attack and capture FINSCHHAVEN, we did not have long for thought. Presumption turned to jest, higher authority decreed that we should strike immediately, strike before a beaten dis-organised enemy could gather his weary remnants and ~~make~~ mould them once more into a formidable fighting foe.

Hurried was our preparation, on the eve of the 21st, only five short days after the taking of LAE, we stood, fully equipped waiting the the beach, it was late evening, the close of a tropical night was fast falling, soon it would be dark, the American troop transports destined to carry us on our mission were coming in in, away into distance silently riding the calm waters, the silhouettes of our escorts could be seen waiting!

"EIGHTISH" embarkation began, shortly after nine we were all aboard, the L.C. Is heavily laden groaned and heaved then slid away, their blunt noses swinging around to the open sea, we were on our way. "It's ib again" the old platitude common among seasoned campaigners on the eve of impending battle was frequently heard. I was one of those who leaned on the deck railing and watched the receding shore, the dark fringe of the tree tops fading from view, all was peaceful and serene.

The convoy strung out in line, led and flanked by ships of war, a scene long to be remembered, barely three weeks before we had participated in another such scene, a longer one, in conjunction with the remainder of the 9th Div. and support units we had carried out the first Australian amphibious operation of the present war. This was to be the 20th Bde, second such "show"; our spirits were high, we who had never known the bitterness of defeat, knew by our hearts we never would, leadership second to none was ours, behind us the experience of LAE, Tradition, our fathers at GALLOPOLI, we could not fail.

The night wore on uneventfully, sleep did not come easily, the dawn and action were too close, some slumbered oblivious of the morrow, others were noticeable restless.

Three third a.m.. The quietness of the night was broken by the ships bell, this was reveille and the beginning of "our day". Those who were not already up and about, quickly scrambled out and went on deck to enjoy the early freshness of the morning. Half an hour later we were called below. Breakfast of "bully" and biscuits followed, half a pint of tea, facilities on board were not the best for feeding, it was scratch as scratch can, nobly cared or grumbled, the food was eaten in silence, these men understood!

Some men stood alone with their thoughts, others in groups of two or three, talking lowly, most made a last check of gear, tested their weapons, then settled down to await the signal to prepare, this the hardest period of all.

Those last minutes of waiting! Soon the barrage would open!

A little before five we heard the first bark of the guns, for a eleven long minutes we listened, it seemed an eternity, cooped below waiting! We could hear the juffled reports of shells bursting on shore, the roar of our planes strafing the beach.

The A.P.Ds would by now have loaded our assault troops into barges, soon these would be on their way. Thoughts, raced through our minds, and still we waited! Suddenly as the barrage opened, as suddenly it ceased. We knew our wait was nearly over in six minutes our fwd elements would be ashore, The quick "rat-tat-tat" of the machine guns broke the morning air. Instinctively we knew it was an opposed landing. Thank God! At last we knew something definite of what was going on. One or two spoke slowly and low they said "Its on again."

The order! Get ready to land, come sharp and clear, we were ready, Up the gangway we struggled, kneeled behind the landing ramp, so solemn, so quietly we might have been at prayer, enemy fire was heavy, over all hung an odor of burnt powder, small arms fire beat into the bow and sides of the craft, causing a whining unnerving noise as it ricocheted. In the half light tracer shells lit their path across the dky.

$\frac{1}{2}$  Our praise must here be paid to our gallant Allies the American boat gunners, it was they who blazed retaliation, the pressure on the triggers seemed never to release, we owe them a debt of gratitude, minus their courageous part, our losses would indeed have been heavy.

Our automatics firing, grenades bursting, brought us back to realization, this was sweet music to our ears, we knew our fwd elements had gained the shore. The feeling of relief was indescribable.

We were racing in, assault barges on their way out passed, almost unnoticed. It was lighter now, dimly we could see at the waters edge motionless forms, thoughts were varied, was our advance pinned on the tide line? We had little time to think the craft hit the beach, jolted back, the ramp went vattering down, we reaced ashore and as we passed we knew those still bodies could move no more! Their's was the Supreme Sacrifice."

We went to ground, twenty yards ahead of the first wave. The enemy held in strength the edge of the timber. Rapidly those in authority grasped the significance of the situation, we had landed far to the south. Units sub-units, split out of order, infantry, medical, odds and sods intermingled, men shouting what coy, "What Bn," endeavouring to sort themselves out, this was the sequel to hard training discipline, irksome at times in camp, now proving the full extent of its worth.

Then! The order "Go in and establish a beach head lads," not heard, but clear it came, the enemy fire was still intense and one moment hisitancy prevailed, then in from the sea zero swept, a yell went up. The mob went in We learned later that Bde HQ, in fighting too.

The advance reshed on, attacking and taking no foe could hold them now, stretcher-bearers dropping behind to tend the wounded, the broken body of an enemy lay at the fork of a tall tree, above a snipers platform, more evidence of a naval gunners accuracy. A prisoner was taken, he yielded much valuable information regards opposition strength, disposition meagre detail of tactical plan.. From him we learned of the "Mikado" Fanatical Imperial Marines! Blue Ribbened troops of Japan, little we cared. We who had tamed and disillusioned the "Wolves of Tuscany". We who at ALAMBEIN had smashed the arrogant Nazis of Rommel's Afrika Korps. Before us, new blood for the 20 Bde.

oon we had reach d the coast track running south-west to the native village of KATIKA+ here we paused, sorted out the 2/17 to the right flank by the SONG river, the 2/15 Bn to ensure the immediate security of the beach head. 2/13 to exploit West up SIKI ck, and south along coast track to HELDSBACH then south west to ZAG afea. The left flank coy of the Bde landing rgroup had not yet been located. The Unit Commander was confronted with the task of organising a programme for three coys instead of four, this was immediately done and the push continued with out undue delay. By midday our troops had been heavily engaged on the SIKI ck, we suffered 27 casualties HELDSBACH plantation, was in our hands, communication had been established with the missing coy, they were in occupation of the Launch Jetty area. Among the coconuts we rested, awaiting orders, here we experienced a "doing over" by our airforce, Mitchells flew slowly back and forth with aggravating regularity, strafing the area, we wondered if ever they would go away, eventually they did

THREE.

Orders come we move on, late that afternoon heard a welcome "boom" the 25 pounders were in form and registering out to the West, somebody said " a place called SATELBERY was the target.

Night fell finishing a crowded day, one of the fullest days we had ever seen, here was time for reflection, 21 days bulk supply had, come with us, vast quantities of ammunition, the smooth working efficiency of the Q staffs showed out within a few hours it was off the beach and under cover of the trees.

The action was going well, our spirits were high. Roughly our line ran from the SONG river south west of KATIKA+ as far as ZAG thence we had covered the main tracks, we slept that night between picket shifts with a deep feeling of self satisfaction.

The 23rd dawned fine, light rain had fallen during the night, long before the first light the troops were astir, an early breakfast and preparation for a move followed, our success of yesterday must be exploited 2317 Bn. would extend their left flank to ZAG. relieving the 2313 Bn of the responsibility. This morning we witnessed the effect of good staff additional work on the day precious bulldozers had followed our advance south clearing the track, now a convoy of jeeps carrying supplies went through. The day promised to be quiet, a patrol penetrated to the air strip found it unoccupied returned. Midday the 2/13 Bn were assembled by the Jetty. The 2/15 Bn passed through, shortly after the 2/13 Bn pushing south, the battle for FINSCHHAVEN+ was about to begin. On the way down it was obvious the Jap did not intend to fight on the flat coastal country. We wondered how

far back he had gone. That night we advanced 3000 yds to the north of the BUME river here we heard the news, the 2/15 Bn had reached the river, the coast track was under observation and was being heavily mortared. It was evident the enemy was making their stand on the high ground along the south bank recon parties had suffered casualties, machine guns were infiltrating the stream. The night was uneventful, we moved at dawn left the main track and followed a path south west over the high country. This was our first hand difficult climb. From the top for the first time we looked down on FINSCHHAVEN we pushed on, stops were frequent while the forward coy felt its way, at long last we reached the flat river country and waited. Two coys retraced their steps over that torturous path, returning with the Bns rations, later the 2/17 troops came through with supplies for the 2/15.

Here we learned a coy of the 13th had forced its way over the BUME, under heavy machine gun fire, their losses had not been light, waist deep water, steep slippery banks, increased ten-fold the difficulty of crossing. We now had a bridge head, all ranks admired their achievement, this accomplishment would go down in official records as an outstanding feat of the campaign.

Elements of the 13th crossed later without loss and went up the south west slopes digging in astride the TIRIMORO track. The bridge head was far from safe, it had been dearly won, early next morning the 15th coy struck east, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and gaining a high feature overlooking the river, this relieved the position considerably.

Three coys of the 13th then moved south east occupying the high kunai country 800 yds north west of KAKAKOC. The fourth coy working as an independent force fought its way out and occupied the junction of the KAKAKOC-TITIMORO tracks, thus cutting the enemies main line of retreat. The 15th Bn were now situated in the west north corner of the SALANKAUA+ plantation, the enemy was strongly entrenched east along the river and to the south in depth.

The two Bns were now holding ground of immense tactical importance, territory that had been hard won, the price paid, life, blood, and sweat. Sick men heavy with fever stayed on, courageously playing their part, others tired, haggard, unshaven, eyes swollen for want of rest were there, super-human effort won the day. If ever there existed men, who did not know the meaning of "defeat" it was these men. Throughout the campaign, fires had not been allowed, the canned heat issue inadequate, tea was priceless, but still they carried on.

Here the commanders were faced with a grave problem, one they had not known previously, the difficulty of supply, to overcome this three stages was established, back in the vicinity of the bulk dump, A ech a thousand yards north of the BUME forward supply to the west on the river and 600 yds in the rear of the fighting troops. The coast track was still subject

to heavy fire, jeeps were not allowed past A ech. food and ammunition had to be man-handled from her, knowing the sufferings and difficulties of the fwd. troops, the 13th Coy Fwd. Engineers volunteered to carry they rendered yeoman service, without their assistance and cooperation our final assault would have been delayed much longer.

Rapid had been our advance, troops left to guard the rear were insufficient, our supplies vulnerable to infiltration, carrying parties moved in fighting formation, ready for any eventuality. During this period of waiting, over patrols were active, frequent clashes occurred, we both suffered and inflicted casualties, stretcher-bearers were busy, heavy rain fell tracks narrow muddy and greasy, special mention must be given to the men who carried wounded down the TIMMORO track, only those who participated could realise the haggard, men who carried down the path, winding down grades as steep as 30 degrees and took ten to fourteen men to juggle a stretcher down that trail.

Events moved slowly these trying days of uncertainty. Slowly sufficient supplies were being accumulated at the top. The Brigadier came often, war correspondents were numerous, news was scarce, we heard the 17th Bn had repulsed several light counter-attacks the enemy was feeling from the north. Own arty. support and mortars continued to harass the Jap at intermittent periods, Vickers well the forepumped belt after belt out, the heavy guns were now part of a rifle coys attacking force the crews "bullocked" them down forward to within yards of the enemies defences.

"Father Time" was ageing, another army came down to the BUMI+ it's weapons a coffee urn, it's captain a good Samaritan, proudly he hoisted his units flag, its emblem a Kangaroo, he came not to reproach us for past sins, or preach of the men we might have been. It is ideal, practical Christianity, he succoured the wounded and sick, revived the tired and weary his was a happy little halfway tavern for those that passed.

The 29th of Sept. after a wet night the day was clear, the last of the ammunition come up, we were ready, tomorrow the offensive would be resumed, plans were discussed, final orders given. "/43 Bn had arrived and relieved the 17th, the 4th Bn. had been driving up from the south, this was a relieving news indeed, sorely needed assistance was on the way.

Eight a.m. the last day of the month, Vulti Vengeance bombers swept low over SALAN AUA plantation, skimming the palm tops, strafing and bombing. We stood on the hill, in awe, fascinated as we watched them come and go. We did not envy the enemy. The air strike ended. The unit struck! A two pronged drive, our objective supper and lower KAKA KOC, the going was heavy, the terrain treacherous, contact extremely difficult to maintain platoons were separated, the battle commenced! A struggle bitter and bloody The push continued, forward elements charged deeply constructed positions in the ILLEBBECK, fierce hand to hand fighting ensued, the Jap was liquidated, our casualties in the vicinity of seventy, stretcher-bearers were at a premium, we could not spare the men, the 15th sent a platoon for the job.

A "bloody" day, deeds of gallantry many, nightfall found the remnants of the 13th coys, occupying the low ground 200 yds north west of KAKA KOC, their position precarious, above the a veritable fortress, the danger of encirclement more than a possibility, combined their total strength less than eight, they had come so far, whatever the cost now they hold their gain.

The night dragged mercilessly, with the new month came sunshine, today the climax, we either succeeded or failed. Cautiously a plan went into operation the reserve coy passed the fwd. elements, commenced a "wayback" movement on the village, intending to attack from the east, a daring endeavour. Simultaneously the 17th passed through the 15th sweeping south. Expectantly we waited, any minute the final battle would begin now. But vain was our wait, it never came. 'This the end.' A bloodless victory "Imperial Marines" and the spirit of SAMURAI had taken advantage of the night and fled.

Came evening, we went down to FINSCHHAVEN by the sea, here lay peace, and primitive civilisation, native padsavenued by hibiscus in bloom, stately palms almost regal in their look, flowering Brangipanni, island fruit in abundance. This an artists' tropical splendour, a romancer's paradise The soldiers' reward of victory. All were happy, we had done our job, once more the 20th had got through.

VICTOR. GRINTELL, CPL.



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USE MILITARY ADDRESS ONLY.

1

From No. NY 34429 Name Walter Perry Unit RA of 2/13

Date 22/sep/1943

of capture

Landing at Finschafen, of 22/9.

It was on the morning of the 22nd September, just before dawn that we sailed into a beach five miles north of Finschafen, our object to capture and hold Finschafen. On the last rays of a setting moon we could look back behind our craft, and see numerous other craft taking up their positions for the run into the beach. All was quite as the warships moved in on our right with all their guns cocked shorewards. They were to shell for eleven minutes, and then the quiet was broken with the roar of their broadsides as they poured salvo after salvo into the thick jungle on the fringe of the shore. By this time we were all standing on the deck of our L.C.T. with all our equipment on and baynets fixed, everyone tense and excited as we slowly drew nearer to the beach. By this time the fire of the warships had died down, except for a odd round. Someone remarked "the first wave would be off by now" and still now reply from the shore. Our craft scraped a coral reef and backed off and came in again just then the sound of machine gun fire, and thrown grenades



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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

2

came out to us, and a occasional bullet glanced off from the side of our craft, we hit the beach about twenty yards from ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> shore, and as the ramps dropped, and the next thing we are up to our waist in water, several of the chaps lose their footing and if it was not for their mates they may <sup>have</sup> drowned, as their heavy equipment, keeps them unbalanced we reach the shore, by this there is a terrific din going on with bullets and grenades going off all around, also the heavy machine guns on the craft, are spraying the treetops for snipers one of our chaps is hit and the cry for stretchers bears rings out, we stop a minute to organize, and then on to the thick timber, which is about twenty yards from the waterline and then across a line of gaps trenches which they have fled from, one chap has unwisely stayed in a coconut shell box, he wounds a couple of our chaps, but is disposed of by a stretcher bearer who thrusts his rifle in the shell box and pulls the trigger, the going is getting harder now, and





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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

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3  
have to push and slash our way through the thick jungle, it is now getting light and we can see a lot better, four sections on the left run into several gaps who think they are his men, one of the gap officers came up to one of our chaps, gabbering something in gap language, he is very close, before he finds out his mistake, he whips up his revolver and has a shot, but misses it his last, as Bluey got him with his rifle, a few burst of Tommy guns wound a few and the rest take to their heels and bolt, we push forward a few hundred yards and halt, were we call the roll and find that we are only ~~a~~ two men short.

We start off again and struck the track we were looking for as we passed along it, we came across several dead gaps that Bluey had accounted for, they looked very queer, with their faces the colour of yellow ivory, it was here that Bluey lost one of his bravest officers Mr. Appleton, he was killed by a gap grenade, we pushed on through Bluey across a creek, there were many signs of gaps about but they had apparently retreated, we were put to



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From No. 4 Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

earthquake  
some, small arms fire coming from the right we think  
it was D'coy, engaging a post, some of the shots came  
very close, after a few minutes we pushed on, and  
struck the high ground leading to Helback mission,  
which was a mass of wreckage here we had breakfast  
and a shell we could see our planes bombing and  
strafing the Japs we pushed on again by this time the  
going was getting very steep, and we were all feeling  
the strain, we sent a patrol out and after some  
very steep climbing we found no Japs we returned to  
Helback for dinner looking <sup>out to sea</sup> we could see ~~so~~ a battle  
going on between Jap bombers and our warships  
they were however too far out for us to observe any results.  
We camped that night at Tereka a native village  
all was quite about there next morning we cut across  
country land after some stiff climbing we cut the  
Sattberg track we progressed up this for as far  
as the Gag feature here we were relieved by a boy  
of the 14<sup>th</sup> Bn. It was here that the P. O. B. reported  
no enemy in the direction of Sattberg, we retraced  
our steps back through Helback on to the track  
leading to Ginschafen, we camped that night, in



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From No. ....

5

Name .....

Unit .....

Date .....

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in front of a Battery of 25 Pds. were we dug in as  
a guard for the artillery. They opened up about  
eight o'clock and the Pak replied with a few rounds  
from his mountain gun, one lobbed right in  
among our positions and wounded two of our  
chaps in sight. Then we also had another scare later  
on by hearing movement in front of us. \* we  
were going to open up when we found it that it  
was a horse, which we never expected to see. He  
was a very lucky horse. From there we pushed  
along the main track until we came to our Bn  
Sq. where we turned right and began the stiff  
climb up towards the Bumi River. The going here was  
very tough. We had to pull ourselves up by the trees  
hand over hand and finally reached the top  
and went along to the top of the ridge till it slopes  
down to the river. Parts of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Bns  
were held up here for a few days until a bridge  
head was formed across the river. We acted as a  
carrying party until about three coys crossed. It was here  
that two coys of the 15<sup>th</sup> crossed and on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Sept  
and carried out their very successful attack on a high



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From No. 6 Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

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Ridge overlooking Finchhafen we also crossed the same day Sunday and ~~after~~ camping from where we were we could hear the Japs squealing as the 15<sup>th</sup> Bn got among them. we camped that night and next morning we proceeded to go through the 15<sup>th</sup> Bn, and advanced about three hundred yards to the edge of a coconut plantation about a thousand yards from Finchhafen where we came upon several coconut pillboxes after scouting around we found that they were unoccupied. It was here that the boys found some good scavenging three pairs of binoculars and an officers sword. four section sent out a patrol and sighted some Japs, the Jap C.I. had by this time sighted us and made things very lively for us with his mountain gun some of us had some very narrow escapes from falling coconuts & knocked off by the shrapnel, ~~in~~ cut a coconut ~~at~~ tree clean off in front of us and two Japs were nearly buried from a close shell next day the Jap opened up again and wounded several of Japs. we moved from there on the third day further around on the ridge we dug in for the night, on the day 29<sup>th</sup> sept



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4  
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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

Copy sent out two patrols one in morning ~~and night~~  
which was seven Ptn, which sighted a patrol of  
thirty Japs, eight Ptn went out about two O'clock  
and ~~the~~ we were only about a hundred yards from  
our position in the direction of Kakagoo when the  
point scout sighted three Japs who immediately opened  
up on him he went to ground and returned the  
fire, he succeeded in getting back to the rest of the  
section, who by this time had fanned out each  
side of the ~~creek~~, ~~and~~ track and engaged the  
enemy, he was on one side of the creek and we were  
the other there was some very brisk fire for a  
while, and then a interval of silence, we found  
after that the Jap was up to his old game of encircling  
a section, of noble platoon immediately went out  
under Sergeant Delawney to trace a track around  
the enemy, they met with very heavy fire and on  
their return two men were killed the Sergeant was  
also wounded with a bullet through his back succeeded  
in bringing the rest of his section safely back the  
Jap had in the meantime brought up more reinforcements  
and as it was getting dark, we withdrew back to



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From No. .... Name 8 Unit .....

Date .....

~~positions~~ our positions there were some chaps  
had some very narrow escapes one had the  
sights shot off his rifle one of our chaps succeeded  
in shooting a sniper out of a tree the first one  
we had encountered to show how dense the  
jungle is one gap across the creek about twenty  
yards had a stoppage on his machine gun and  
we could hear him jabbering as he tried to fix  
it we chucked a grenade but do not know  
the results We stayed another day in the position  
and on Friday 1st Oct the 13th Bn attacked the  
area of Finschafen and Kakag which were  
the main enemy H.Q. A coy was reserve coy and  
on eleven Friday morning we formed up for  
the attack with B and D coy attacking the  
boys were very much heartened by the fine  
bombing and strafing which preceded the  
attack especially the white vengeance dive bombing  
we had a grandstand view of. At twelve O'clock  
after the artillery barrage the attack commenced  
the gap fought very hard for this important position  
They were Marines and are supposed to be the

USE MILITARY ADDRESS ONLY



9

crack troops of Japan they were a lot taller than the ordinary Japanese soldier, some of them in the vicinity of six feet. Boy ~~was~~ attacked on the left, and one platoon being pinned down in a very deep creek, the enemy had a very strong point on the opposite side, eight Platoon of Coy was sent down to engage the gap while the Platoon of Boy worked around and outflanked the position, which was silenced after much fierce fighting on both sides, the two inch mortar came into its own and proved that it is very handy for jungle fighting, the attacking force then turned left and attacked the village of Sakagawa which was situated on a very high ridge, and by night fall had fought their way up to the outskirts of the village, the attack went on the following morning and the Ginoschafen fell at 11 o'clock on the 2nd, the gap had withdrawn during the night and except for some odd gaps who was cooking a feed of rice, the place was deserted, the boys found many documents as the Japs had got out in a hurry, one of chap in our section found a light day clock in good condition, and so we had it hung up in our position to do our piguet in, it looked very much out of place, the Jap here left behind many heavy machine guns and ammunition, also two of his 25mm mt. by the numerous tunnels that were dug into the hill, he showed that he does not relish our bombing, many shafts went in. for (over)

PLEASE WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

ANY REFERENCE TO SHIPPING OR TROOP MOVEMENTS WILL RESULT IN THE DELAY OR WITHDRAWAL OF THIS LETTER.

USE MILITARY ADDRESS ONLY

TO

hundred feet or more we also found so  
his foxholes very cleverly concealed with  
over the top of them which made  
very hard to pick up  
and so after a much needed spell  
we were ready for the next campaign



Conclusion

Lt Col J Perry  
8 Pl. 13  
A Coy.

PLEASE WRITE ON BOTH SIDES



Supplement to Essay.

FINSCHHAFEN 22-9-43 - 10-4-40-43)

They also serve

Well, Johnny boy, you've asked me,  
For a story of the fray.

- The story of Finschhafen;  
And the part we played at Lae.  
Well, old boy, it's hard to pick,  
On any group of one  
And say they played the major part  
In the battles we have won.

And very often, too, you'll find  
That in these honours claimed -  
'Tis not always told in truth,  
- The right men p'raps not named.  
And so old man I've picked a blame,  
So seldom praised at home.  
- To that gallant little band of men,  
I dedicate this poem. . .

In the jungles of New Guinea,  
On the rough tracks up and down,  
You'll see the sweat streams dripping  
From their heads and backs of brown.  
They tread these tracks of torture,  
Not once - but many times.  
Not empty handed, Johnny,  
But loaded on the climbs. (overleaf)

Loaded up with cargo,  
As precious as 'tis made.  
Tough men, true - but gentle,  
As they hit the hardest grade.  
Through the bush and open spaces,  
They're thinking of but one -  
Open to the bullets  
Of a foe's waiting gun.

Perhaps no men have seen it worse,  
- The ugly side, I mean  
For in the sight of broken mates,  
What harder sight is seen?  
So, Johnny boy, remember,  
This gallant little clan,  
And tell the whole world Johnny,  
Of the Army Stretcher man.

In conjunction with Essay  
Sgt T. A. C.  
L. O. R.

Essay ~~on~~ a petition (23 pages)

Operations Fuschhafen (22-9-43) to Satelburg Rd 4-11-43)

In a previous essay I took you up to midday of the first days landing at Scarlet Beach - Fuschhafen - September 22nd 1943. From midday I continue:

The story of ensuing land operation to the initial objective - Fuschhafen and later the ultimate objective - Satelburg and surrounding strong points is one I defy any man to portray in the epic, courageous manner in which men not only faced formidable, skilfully placed enemy strong posts, but the rigors and heart-breaking conditions of wild, tropic clad mountain sides and swirling rock bound mountain streams - streams surrounded as they were by precipitous, slippery buffs and ridges on which the enemy was invariably installed, left a dangerous opening through which our men had no option but to advance, presenting excellent targets to high sitting enemy gunners.

I repeat, I defy any man to portray day by day settings of the hectic weeks which were to follow. For only those who actually experienced

1 page 2 overleaf

them have them stained indelibly on  
their hearts. These they are written by  
the hand of action, not in mere pen  
or pencil, but by sweat and blood...

Impressions are cheap, and,  
unfortunately, not always correct. And  
so, in my attempt at reconstruction  
I pray any oversight or jumble of  
facts may be excused, for I kept  
not a diary, and any attempt to  
go back over so much ground and  
so many events, must invariably  
suffer from distortion of facts.

With a hurried meal of Bully  
Beef and Biscuits over, a meal  
which some of us had managed to get,  
B.H.Q. was busy with problems of  
the battle which were growing hourly  
and generally getting things in  
readiness for the land drive ahead.  
Dig lines were strung up and commu-  
nication established with coys. Rough  
shelters were hurriedly constructed  
for the night wherein the C.O. and  
"G" section may hope to keep  
essential documents and  
maps from the weather.

At this stage, Don Coy,  
probing slightly to the North had

3

encountered strong enemy resistance from hidden fox-holes by a thick patch of Kunai grass. Our men, at a bad disadvantage because of the enemies adaptability of the excellent cover from view afforded by the vegetation and cover from fire in their fortified fox holes, neither expected any quarter, nor gave it. Bullets zipped and whistled both ways as Owens popped spasmodically, Brens spat in staccato bursts; the intermittent cracking of rifles intermingling with the harsh coughing of the enemies heavier machine guns. Sheer guts carried one platoon through to "do over" a strong post. But it was costly. The spot was sticky to say the least, but panic was conspicuous by its absence. Forward troops were pinned down. The slightest move on their part was a signal for the skulking gap to open up in a frenzy of shooting. Sweat trickled down tense faces, and throats became oddly dry, as the tropic sun swung overhead. Keen eyed men watched for the slightest opening and stealthily probed. . . . Tautened nerves kicked as ugly snouts of hidden enemy

weapons spat zipping lead seemingly <sup>4</sup>  
right in the faces of crouching men.  
Here and there a man would fall...

Tojo was tenacious, but  
our men were not lacking in this  
attribute. Besides, we had more  
weight to our argument. Stealthily  
men with dren and the no mortars  
took over, plastering the area with  
3" "Leadaches" Probably the deadly  
work of the mortars was most appreciated  
by the 17th Bn, who at this stage passed  
through, and soon discovered the  
position to be evacuated.

Earlier, a pltn from  
C Coy had landed farther down the  
coast and shortly afterwards captured  
a 75 mm Gun. A little further down  
the beach the accountered for five Japs.

It is one of the para-  
doxes of war that amidst the ugliness  
of battle invariably some aspect  
of humour, though grim in its way,  
traps up to break the tension. Perhaps  
the inimitable wise-cracking of the  
Australian Soldier, even in the tough  
spots, reflects the optimism of  
outlook upon his own capabilities -  
in no sense over optimistic - which knows  
no defeats. Perhaps in this respect  
he sees humour in things which

would not be so obvious to others. 5  
At all events, at this particular time  
they saw plenty of humour in the  
following incident, though I doubt  
if the rather lucky victim saw  
the funny side at the time.

Abruptly the C Coy men  
rounded a bend in the track, they  
beheld a rather odd sight. For,  
nonchalantly sauntering down the  
track, overcoat slung over his  
shoulder, tin hat swinging in his  
hand, and rifle slung over his shoulder  
— for # all the world like a man  
going on leave — was a Jap Soldier!

Possibly the surprise our men  
received, and the many twists and  
turns in the track allowed him to  
make good his escape. However, the  
boys will never forget the look on  
his face as he spotted them, nor  
the wild scramble as they opened  
up on him. A little later C Coy  
Patrol reached its objective and  
consolidated for the night.

And there in the density  
of the tropic night — our first on  
Finschhafen shore — quiet reigned  
once more, occasionally broken by the  
abrupt crack of a rifle or the sharp

6

burst of an Owl, as men asked ~~no~~  
questions of rustling bushes, but  
probed with hot lead. Perhaps  
you would be just dozing in pursuit  
of a little sleep, when some alert  
sentry would open up, and the sudden  
start on your part would convince  
you had leapt ~~to~~ two feet into the air.  
Willingly you join sundry voices  
from the darkness slurring the good  
name of "some Trigger-happy —!"  
Inwardly thankful he was on the alert.

Came the first grey  
flush of dawn, and sleepy-eyed men  
"stood to." Another day was born herald-  
ing the second day of the Finschhafen  
Campaign. Soon various patrols  
were probing the hidden depths of  
the jungle. One such patrol reached  
the aerodrome whilst others exploited  
in other directions. Time dragged by  
and ultimately the main drive on the  
Bumi River was planned and put into  
operation. Little did we realise then  
the difficulties which would be encountered  
in this drive, nor the problems which would  
grow hourly.

And so, on the move once  
more. marching down the Plantation Road  
towards Finschhafen we abruptly took to the



rough country and slopes, preparatory to working our way to the heights overlooking the Bumi and Fuschlafen.

At the time, struggling as we were with personal gear, and various instruments of war such as mortars, bombs, M.G.'s and Py gear, the rough going on the foliage clad slopes seemed to be hard enough. Then the forward sections struck the steep, slippery butt of the hill which would take us to the heights. News trickled back that it was a hands and knees job. Surveying the gear we were dragging along, we looked — and wondered...

Slowly and laboriously we pushed on, men panting for breath, dripping with sweat, cursing as they slipped and clanked at the slippery face of the hill, edged forward; abruptly slipped back; a piece of gear occasionally slipping back and tumbling to the bottom, tired men forced to retrieve them and toil back up.

At long last, men and gear had reached the summit and literally collapsed to the ground for a breather. All too soon the spell was over and men struggled back into their "harness"; picked up the gear, and pushed on towards the Bumi.

Came the dawn of the 25th<sup>8</sup>  
The day set down for the river crossing.  
From an early hour our twenty five  
pounders had been pounding the heights  
beyond. Overhead, the Boomerang  
Reice planes, skimmed the tree clad  
mountain tops and flashed back directions  
to the probing artillery.

At an early hour too, two  
detachments of our mgs moved down  
to give cover fire for the crossing. Soon  
everything was in readiness for what  
gave every indication of being a very  
sticky show.

Abruptly, a little hell  
broke loose as the Vickers opened up.  
Men splashed into the water as the  
15th Bn moved forward to form a bridgehead.  
Under a hail of lead, Don Coy of the  
15th moved across, suffering casualties  
from snipers and mortar fire. Our  
artillery immediately got onto his  
mortar position and gutted them.  
Pur C Coy followed the 15th and  
crossed without casualty.

During this time, B H I was  
back a couple of hundred yards on  
high ground. A Coy, in defence of the  
rear, were back on the flat by a  
large Kunai patch.  
That the crossing had

been a success was obvious. A pltn<sup>9</sup> of  
Don Coy joined the forces on the enemy  
side of Lo river and together they  
formed a perimeter of defence on the  
bank of the river and stretching some  
distance up the slope.

Even at this stage  
our supply lines were lengthy and  
the job of carrying supplies, long  
and arduous. True, a Jeep track was  
being cut through by the foot of the  
hills but was as yet not completed.

Difficulties of Tobing stretchers  
Bearers were nothing short of terrific,  
and, as the days wore to pass  
so too were the abovementioned problems  
destined to swell to enormous proportions.

Patrol activity was intensified  
- ever probing upwards, on occasions  
costly. These casualties are under-  
standable if you know the conditions.  
They were in no way caused by  
any superiority of the enemy, but  
rather by their superiority of positions.

Yard by yard our men  
battled up unbelievably wild country,  
The slopes at places approaching  
the perpendicular, made fast progress  
impossible. Those who later climbed  
the hill, even after rough steps had

10

been seen from the slope's fall, marvelled that men had carried gear, let alone fight their way up. Even under ideal conditions it is indeed hard to see the wounded being carried on. Here the trip of both wounded and carriers was a nightmare. The track, torturous and treacherous though going up, was if anything even worse going down with a heavy man on a stretcher.

Under the heat of the tropic sun, the work of these men is inestimable.

With sweat-streams glistening on little brown bodies, muscles flexing and contracting as they juggle the stretchers to ease the bumping, they indeed did everything possible to ease the plight of the maimed.

Ammunition, water and ration parties were having their share of hardships, as all these essentials had to be carried from dumps to forward areas. Rain, too, constantly added difficulties to all concerned, making as it did the steep, narrow tracks all but impassable.

Eventually, the 15th, after a sudden push up a particularly steep pinch, caught the gap in a

comparatively open Kunai patch, making  
 short work of the squalling yellow man.  
 This gave them a valuable height  
 and our men, busy doing enemy strong  
 posts, were gaining their share of  
 high ground. Under constant pressure  
 the gap was slowly but surely being  
 squeezed from his fox holes. A  
 sidelight of his animal like  
 style of fighting is given by his  
 action in putting a sniper behind  
 one of our dead whom we were  
 endeavouring to get out. Immediately  
 our stretcher bearers attempted to  
 get to the body the sniper would  
~~immediately~~ disclose his position  
 just long enough to pump lead their  
 way.

And so, the days slipped  
 by to the night of the 9th with extensive  
 patrol activity occupying most of  
 the interim. Odd men dribbled down  
 to the river for a well earned wash  
 and clean up. During this period,  
 Engineers & who had volunteered to take  
 rations and ammo to our forward troops  
 showed hearts as big as their backs in

the task they had asked for. 12  
The morning of the 10th saw  
the opening of what was to be the climax  
of the Finschhafen Show. Kakakog,  
presumed HQ of the defenders, had  
to be taken. This area had been  
well plastered with bombs and  
shells. However, it was anticipated  
that resistance would still be strong.  
The Plantation Area was also  
expected to be hard to crack, even though  
it had previously received a  
lancing from dive bombers to the tune  
of high explosives and machine gun  
fire.

In the ensuing advance  
B Coy struck trouble early in  
Allebe Creek. Endeavouring to cross  
they struck heavy opposition from enemy  
strongpoints and were pinned down. A Coy,  
at this stage in reserve, sent 2 pltn to  
assist B Coy.

Eventually the pinned  
down men fought their way clear, and  
during the ensuing advance a successful  
bayonet charge helped to change the  
position considerably - to our liking.

Tojo was still throwing  
plenty of lead back. Sundown found  
full pressure being exerted on Kakakog.

13

F Coy moved to a high feature and consolidated for the night. Don Coy closed in and dug in for the night.

In the early morning light of the 11th, Brens, turned on Kakakog, barked a challenge, a challenge which was never answered, for the Kakakog defenders had taken a sound thrashing the day before and had taken advantage of darkness to withdraw.

Even the final phase of Kakakog was not without incident, — an incident which reflects the oddness of fate — a fate which at times gives an almost theatrical touch to many incidents of real life.

Just into Kakakog was a section of 9 Pltn. Abruptly they espied a lone gap, apparently wounded, sitting dejectedly on the steps of a battered hut. At this stage our men knew not whether the village was still occupied or not, for, though no fire was an indication, it was no certainty.

And so the lone defender of Kakakog, as ~~was~~ as was subsequently proved, sped on leaden wings (ex Brens) to that Utopian Land, wherein

14

vain dreams of conquest shall not  
be followed by unworthy Australian  
inspired nightmares. . . .

Meanwhile the 17th had  
driven down through Pola in search of  
Fonschapon, but failed to find it! Simply  
because such a place did not exist  
as far as a scattered township or  
village went.

Followed days of moves  
which are best entered as consolidation. A  
Coy had moved to Simbang, and patrolled  
to. Quembeng, where they encountered  
opposition and were held up for a couple  
of days. Then Don Coy moved to Tem  
Tumoro and consequently eased the  
situation. B.H.Q and C Coy were  
installed at Singbang on Langanak Bay  
wherein the Mape River runs to the sea  
and so the inevitable hand  
of time was destined to place the finger  
of impending trouble on the square  
marked 17th of November on the Calendar  
of 1943.

Same the morning of the 17th.  
News had already been received of  
an expected Jap landing. Defences  
were prepared. The day dragged by.  
Soon the purple cloak of another



15  
The night closed about the Island  
nothing had been seen or heard but  
our vigilance was never relaxed.

Abruptly the evening's quiet  
was broken by the harsh rattle of  
machine guns. Scarlet Beach war!  
we were curious and anxious for news,  
but it was to be morning before  
details of happenings the night before  
were received. As usual rumours  
were rife and wild tales of startling  
events swept round. I still do  
not know the authentic details, but  
it appears several barges loaded with  
Gaps landed, but not too many of  
the occupants lived to tell the tale.

One side of the story  
tells of a man's devotion to duty,  
perhaps unexcelled in the annals of  
the Finschhafen campaign.

He was an American attached  
to a shore Bn. and was stationed by  
his 50 calibre gun at the time of the  
landing. Two barges hit the beach in  
front of him. Holding his fire till  
the ramps of the barges dropped to  
the sand, he caught the gaps in a  
hail of lead as they swarmed to  
the beach. Wounded five times and  
finally with a leg blown off he stuck

to his gun and continued firing till<sup>16</sup>  
he dropped. This man's gallant action  
in which he gave his life, probably  
played a major part in the  
Smashing of the Gap landing.

Simultaneously with  
the landing, the gaps pushed back  
down through the plantation and  
forced our M.D.S to be evacuated  
from ~~the~~ Scarlet Beach.

B.H.Q., B and C Coys  
were immediately rushed to  
Kakahog. Next morning we moved again,  
this time towards Kitika, a village  
recaptured by the gaps, who had pushed  
forward and were already threatening  
our artillery. B and C pushed on  
and eventually arrived just in time  
to save the guns, which were firing  
over open sights at the enemy. B  
Coy occupied high ground overlooking  
an open Kumai country, and C took  
up positions by the road - positions  
vacated by the withdrawing arty.  
C Coy immediately exploited and  
struck heavy opposition on a high  
feature of on the bank of the Siki Creek.  
After a short sharp engagement C Coy  
was successful in dislodging the enemy  
from this commanding position.

Heavy clashes took place in the thick country below Kitcha. Eventually the 32nd pushed forward and occupied Kitcha village. Slowly but surely, the gap was pushed back towards his stronghold in the hills - Sattelburg. High on the Sattelburg road the enemies forces had infiltrated through the 43rd Bns lines and inflicted casualties. In the nick of time the 43rd boys fought their way clear.

The 17th Bn were also feeling the pressure as the gaps cut the road behind them. Fortunately they kept a track open at which insured supplies getting to them. The 15th Bn were holding high ground and clung tenaciously to it.

The 24th and 26th Bdes were brought in. The 22nd militia which had marched up coast from Lae were sitting on high ground near Langamat Bay.

Our positions at Lake Creek were relieved by the 48th Bn and we trekked up the steep, winding Sattelburg Road to relieve the Pioneers who were occupying the road below the gaps

who were in turn below the 17th. 18

Hot and bar tried we ultimately reached our objective and took up positions on either side of the road. B Coy, a little higher up the road immediately sent a patrol up the road towards the gap <sup>right</sup> of the road, suffering casualties. For the next couple of days patrols were constantly ~~from~~ probing, but religiously avoided the road.

Eventually B Coy commenced a push, a circling movement well out to the right of the road in an endeavour to outflank the enemy and contact the ~~enemy~~ 17th. Here the gap was found to be strong, heavy clashes occurring, B Coy more than holding their own.

At this stage A Coy was patrolling Tareko and Don Coy well down the road by the 43rd. BHP was well up with C Coy.

B Coy was finding things a little sticky, but not unduly worried. A and Don were moved up to strengthen the perimeter.

On the second of November a determined effort was made to open the road. Early that

19  
morning, our forward Troops opened  
up with rifles and automatics to  
give the enemy the impression the  
attack was coming from our side.  
Abruptly our firing ceased,  
and a Coy of the 17th began its  
drive down the road. Merry hell  
broke loose. Automatics barked  
incessantly, and rifles cracked  
in unison. Hand Grenades wuffed  
in twos and threes. Slowly and  
painstakingly strongposts were  
"done over" but curiously our men  
waited for a glimpse of 17th men.  
At a prearranged signal,  
immediately they glimpsed green  
clad Aussies sneaking through  
the undergrowth, cries of "Tally ho  
the Jot!" echoed down the gullies  
to indicate our position to the  
17th men. Immediately a pltn. of  
our Don Coy moved forward.

The sun had dipped low.  
So near and yet so far! For finally  
the heavy shadow of night prevented  
any possibility of contact between  
our forces that day, even though a  
bare thirty yards separated the  
men. With at least one strongpost  
left it would have been suicidal  
to push on.

20

With the night of the 2nd came orders that at first light - C Coy had to make contact with the 17th "at all costs". And so, in the grey light of dawn, 15 pltn of C Coy moved up the roadway preparatory to moving into the ~~scrub~~ bushes by the left of the roadway. Tense faced, keen eyed men edged into the undergrowth and stealthily moved forward. Minutes sped by. Here and there a twig would snap, jarring on tense nerves like a pistol shot.

Abruptly, almost frighteningly a strong post came in to view. Warily it was inspected. Thank God! Empty!

Back at Coy HQ, men sat round the phone awaiting news of the patrol. Abruptly, the phone buzzed and anxious hands reached for the handset. "What's that? Through -? Good show!" They were through, and contact was made with the 17th! Men grinned and joked in relief. One hour later the right hand side of the road was cleared, and with it a major obstacle for the assault on Sabelburg.

And so, the Ninth had completed  
 yet another phase in the ultimate  
 destruction of the enemy at Sattelburg  
 Truce, many days were to pass  
 - days of hard work and tough  
 fighting ere complete success would  
 be ours. Somehow, in the cool  
 of the late afternoon that day, as  
 you sat and watched jeeps  
 bringing more and more supplies  
 up, you knew ultimate success was  
 certain. Just why you knew I  
 know not. Perhaps the distant  
 rumble of twenty five pounders,  
 base drums in the song of hate,  
 seemed to say it. Or then again  
 you might have glimpsed ~~at~~ the  
 writing far below in the panoramic  
 greenness of the Plantation, and  
 the blue of the Bay beyond. For  
 here another tale is told - a tale  
 of epic advances, not against the  
 spitting mouths of enemy weapons, but  
 constant pushes and consolidation  
 against an agent as stubborn and  
 far more consistent than the  
 yellow defender. This agent -  
 conditions - with its ruling  
 passion vagrancies of weather

22  
seems destined to retard our  
progress and favour the defender  
And so, new weapons or old, well  
tried principles were conscripted  
for service. Now they are serving  
behind the scenes and right up to  
the forward areas. Bulldozers  
scooping and heaving paths for  
the remarkable jeeps to carry  
stores forward. Jeeps, the mighty  
midgets which seem to do everything  
but fly. Often I have seen these  
cars, drawing trailers, stacked with  
gear plus ten or twelve men,  
pushing up steep, rough mountain  
tracks

~~Sea~~ Engineers followed  
the Bulldozers and worked like  
tigers to push the roads ever  
forward. Sea lanes had to be  
cleared by intrepid aviators of the  
Fifth American Airforce and  
clever efficient sailors of the Navy,  
constantly facing the hazards of  
the New Guinea weather. Maps of  
the land were misleading, and  
observation limited. Aussie Recce



planes, cheeky tree-top skimmers — 23  
directing our arty fire and dropping greatly  
appreciated parcels.

Supplies were essential. Barges  
landed on the newly taken Beaches — beaches  
which, but a short time before they had  
played a big part in the taking.

This and much more is the Army  
behind the Army without whom the front  
line men could not exist. They know this  
and readily offer their thanks. Therein  
perhaps lies the secret of the AIF's  
success as Australia's crack land striking  
force; for there is a welded unison  
of thought and action, smooth working  
and powerful in unity, proud of  
success and proud of services which  
contribute so much to this success —  
the Navy and Air Force.

Perhaps this essay would not  
be complete without a vote of thanks to ACF —  
Salvation Army and YMCA who do so much for the  
welfare of the troops.

And here, in the eventide of 1943  
we stand on the tracks of the foothills — tracks  
which the dawning of '44 shall see as roads  
— roads to the hills beyond — roads, with  
but one direction and two objectives —  
Tokio and . . . Freedom.

Enhant: NX 85645  
Lg. Tighe C  
L. O. B.

20

establishment of the Intelligence office  
- the C.O. receiving information from,  
and issuing orders <sup>to</sup> his company commanders.

And there, at mid-day  
of the first day, (closing time set down for this  
narrative) as we sat there, hungrily jamming  
bully beef and biscuits into our mouths,  
reaction set in and for the first time  
that day we suddenly felt weary. Weary -  
- but still wary, and, truth to tell, Rappy  
in a tired sort of way in the knowledge  
that yet another landing had been a  
success. News trickled through that  
our forward troops, though meeting with  
heavy opposition, were still pressing  
on forward.

Although that is as far  
as I am permitted to take you  
I trust I may be given a little ~~etc~~  
extra grace to mention two more items.

Firstly my trip, later in the day,  
back to the landing beach. What I  
saw there was a revelation. Right on  
the spot <sup>where we</sup> had landed ~~we~~ and but  
a few yards from the water's edge,  
was a ugly looking machine gun nest  
Immediately behind this were ten or  
twenty yards of crawl trenches. How  
we got ashore there was a miracle and

Constantly was I looking for  
to see grey haired man I had seen  
brought in near Kopei. ~~Then~~ Once  
again my eyes turned to the inside  
cover. Here Doctor Shredzler! as  
from a distance I heard the sound  
of laughter from a group of P.O. men  
nearby, knees rustled as though from  
a sudden breath of wind. Abruptly  
the front page of the German volume  
shivered and turned over, thrusting from  
view the photograph of Hitler and  
the pencilled inscription. The spirit  
of Anjar? Wind? I know not, but  
in fancy I could see the aged, but  
steady hand of Old Lady History  
scrawling across the foot of a well  
filled page in the book of time  
the word, Matfeest.

~~Abruptly~~ the pages of the volume  
shivered again. For a moment one page  
stood upright then scuttled down on the  
front page, revealing the unsmiling features  
of Ivo Sten. In fancy again, I saw the  
hand of Lady History already filling  
a new page. Soon too, this would be filled. Once  
again the pages of the volume shivered. For a  
moment a page lifted and dropped back into  
position. But in that short space of time I  
glimpsed the wording at the foot of the preceding  
page. A word no human hand had written - Matfeest.

tribute to the guts of the men on the

Secondly, I would pay the warmest  
tribute to the men of the Fifth American  
Force for their remarkable achievement  
in repeatedly forestalling any attempt  
by the Japanese Bombers to intimidate  
us. True, a few bombs crashed down  
early in the landing, but they were well  
of the mark and proved to be his dying  
effort for days to come. Word of thanks  
is also due to those Avissie pilots of  
the Ausn "Boomerangs" for outstanding  
work in receiving for our Artillery. No doubt,  
too, the work of the Landing Craft men played  
no small part in the success of these operations.

And so the Ninth Div, following  
up the invaluable ground work of the Sixth  
and Seventh Divs had once again shown the  
adaptability of the Australian Soldier - This  
time as Marines.

End of Essay.

Enlistant:

Sgt. J. G. C.  
NX 25645  
C-coy.

### Conclusion of Story:

Some days later, as I rearranged  
the contents of my Baversack, I picked out  
and idly turned the cover page of the German  
Volume I had picked up at Hopoi Mission. On the  
first page was a photograph of Hitler. Just  
inside the cover I noticed, scrawled in pencil  
the words "Herr Doktor Stendzler"  
(concluded overleaf)

# Battalion Essay Competition

Section: "Actual Experiences in the Battle"

Submitted by: 17 Platoon

From Heldsbach, following the crest of the spurs, the narrow road rose twistingly towards the Japanese stronghold at Sattelburg. Half-way between these points the enemy had infiltrated, isolating the 17 Battalion and establishing a strong pocket on the road itself. That this track remain open was of vital importance, since it constituted our main supply route to the forces attacking Sattelburg. Accordingly the 13 Battalion moved up close to the enemy, and prepared to open the road.

A small patrol of men from 17 Platoon moved out along the road through our furthest forward company. Divided into ~~three~~<sup>two</sup> groups of three, armed with a Bren and two Queens, they pressed forward for five hundred yards, in the cover beside the track, until they came to a primitive barrier of vines which the enemy had thrown across the road. Cpl Campbell halted his men and crept forward through the ~~canes~~ cane in an endeavour to sight the enemy while he was still out-hunt. Birmingham

Came forward to a position behind a fallen tree from which he observed gaps moving between Campbell and himself. The undergrowth was very thick. A distance of no more than ten yards separated the Platoon Commander from the enemy, while Campbell was further forward and even closer to them, though both he and the gaps were invisible to each other.

When Campbell returned Lieut Birmingham planned to attack this position and brought two sections up to a position from which they might engage the enemy with grenades. As they prepared to move in a scout came back and reported that six gaps were moving north, and to the west, with the possible intention to cut off the party. So a section went into the bush at the side of the road while the Pl. Cmdr took 2 Brens and a rifleman up to the fallen tree.

An unsuspecting gap was on listening post just past the tree. All this was taking place amongst thick clumps of bamboo and heavy secondary growth, and it was possible for men to move unseen within yards of each other. When the Japanese swarmed through Malaya and the islands they

3.

were given much credit as jungle fighters, but in this clash 11 Platoon gave them a lesson in jungle warfare which the survivors should not soon forget. It is very difficult to avoid noise in this type of country yet the party approached to within five yards of the listening post, placed a round neatly behind the gap's ear and raked the whole area with bursts from the two Brens. Two grenades were thrown and screams came from the enemy. Then the patrol returned.

Next day two sections of C Coy dug in behind the fallen tree, where the gap was shot the day before, and 11 Platoon moved up again with orders to occupy any ground which might fall to the 11 Battalion in a proposed attack that day. Later in the day the C Coy sections were withdrawn and, the 11 Battalion failing to attack, 11 Platoon took over C Coy's diggings within twenty yards of the enemy. A grenade was thrown by the gap while the section on the ~~left~~<sup>right</sup> flank was moving in but though it cleared bushes all round them they suffered no casualties.

In the morning Cpl Kennedy's

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Section was told to keep up desultory fire from 0900 to 0910 and then to open up with all available weapons for five minutes, when they were to cease fire and yell loudly to simulate an attack and provide a diversion for the 11 Bn moving up from the West. These tactics drew ~~away~~ little fire from the enemy beyond a few bursts from one L.M.G. and scattered rifle shots.

Crawling silently through the undergrowth, the gaps approached to within yards of the posts which were manned by only fourteen men. From vantage points behind thickets of bamboo they began to hurl grenades in our positions.

11 Platoon replied in kind but they were heavily outnumbered & the enemy had the advantage of knowing the exact location of their holes. The Section on the left flank saw a gap squirming towards them with a grenade in his hand and with a burst from an Owen eliminated him from the game. This went on all the morning — from out of the bushes came grenade after grenade and even allowing for the large number which failed to explode it is surprising that we incurred no casualties. It is certain that our answering fire did not leave the gaps unscathed. But the left section was in old gap positions whose location the enemy



knew to the foot; eventually the incessant grenades forced them to withdraw twenty yards from the fallen tree. In this withdrawal one of our men was shot in the arm.

The Pl. Comd then sent a Vesey pistol and flares to Cpl Kennedy with instructions to fire one every ten minutes to advise the 17 Bn. of our positions, and keep their mortars from it. Every time Kennedy fired the pistol the gaps replied with small arms fire and grenades. In an effort to contact the 17 Battalion usually, two Vesey flares were fired and the Platoon yelled.

"Tallyho the Fox!"

The 17th heard the yells and understood the reference and intention, but were forced, by their proximity to the gap, to remain silent.

Things quietened down later in the day so Cpl. Rothwell with two men crept out to discover whether the gap was still in occupation. They observed the foresight of a rifle poking out from the bushes and heard movement. So they silently retired and brought up a Bren which they sited in a hole beside the gap positions. From this point, almost in the same fox-holes as the gaps they fired four magazines and threw grenades. There was no answering fire.

Later in the afternoon Kennedy and Rothwell went back; this time determined either to contact the enemy or find the position deserted. Contact was made abruptly. Cpl. Rothwell moved carefully round a clump of bamboo with Kennedy close behind him, until a gaf fired a pistol into his face at point-blank range. A twig of bamboo miraculously deflected the round and Rothwell fell to the ground and rolled unharmed to a hole. Kennedy was unable to go to ground without disturbing the bamboo so he stood motionless in the shadow while an unseen gaf fired six shots in his direction. The enemy occupation having been proved, "beyond all reasonable doubt," they both returned safely.

The C.O. ~~and~~ came up to the much disputed fallen tree and he decided, if possible, to burn the gafs out. To this end incendiary bombs were thrown into the area but the undergrowth would not catch.

That night the gaf could be heard moving in the area and this unusual movement suggested that he was evacuating, but, to avoid disclosing the positions of their guns, the platoon did not fire. In the morning at patrol, sent out to reconnoitre the area, found the 17 Bn ~~entering~~

morning in from the West, and the gap gone.

At no time did 11 Platoon have more than fourteen men in their position, but they held it with a tenacity and aggression ~~unlike~~ that won them the personal praise of the Brigade Commanders. No form of warfare can impose greater physical and mental strain on men than this "battle at twenty yards" but in this case, as always it will, the victory was gained by the force which showed the highest qualities of jungle skill and unceasing aggression.

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At no time did I believe in their  
fate. I might have thought they  
were in their position, but they  
were not. I might have thought they  
were in their position, but they  
were not. I might have thought they  
were in their position, but they  
were not.

Battalion

Essay

Competition

5.1/2  
4.7/2  
6

# Essay Competition — "Lessons Learned"

Foreword:

SIG. TIGHE C. C. Coy.  
(10 PAGES)

What are the lessons learned in the Ninth Div's debut to jungle fighting, and in what order of importance would those lessons be divided?

Possibly first on the list would come Strategy. I choose Strategy mainly because everything is so utterly dependant upon good Strategy. Likewise the success of Strategy is dependant on a great variety of items which I shall come to in a moment. Obviously the finest supply routes and lines of communication are useless without the essential Strategy to safeguard and maintain these all important life lines. That is merely commonsense, you say would say, but — what is Strategy but applied commonsense?

And the lessons so learned in Strategy as a whole? Candidly I do not know, for how can a "behind the scenes" private criticise the working of a machine he knows so little of? I imagine those lessons would have been absorbed, dissected and minutely examined long before this by high ranking men who are primarily concerned in Strategies, and no doubt the information so gained will be ably applied in future operations. So much for Strategy as a whole. However, Strategy covering a whole operation is dependant for its success on so many apparently small items which, likened to a jigsaw puzzle, must fit and interlock perfectly to insure success of Strategy as a whole. It is in these smaller items that the more insignificant members of a force, right down to the private play an important part, and a breakdown or oversight in their department may have catastrophic results in the Strategy business.

Therefore these essays, called for as they were and open to men who had but seats on the various "Shows" may possibly bring forward a little constructive criticism which future operations may benefit by. Should this essay contain any such benefit, however small, I shall feel amply paid for the time so spent. (page 2 overleaf)

Lessons Learned

Perhaps one of the most important and essential departments in the Strategy business is the Signals Service, for obviously Strategy is useless unless plans decided upon can be transmitted to the right place at the right time. Being one whose job it is to help establish and maintain lines of communication, I think I am competent to at least comment and present an individual's impression of lessons learned in our particular sphere. Possibly anything I can say has already been passed on. However it is just possible one or two points have escaped notice. Therefore I shall endeavour to cover the items which primarily concerned us in the present campaign.

Firstly, as Strategy is dependant on lines of communications so are we dependant upon men to establish and maintain these lines. Undoubtedly the lesson learned in this aspect is a very marked lesson indeed. For, with absolutely no men to spare at the beginning of the campaign, it was obvious that sickness and wounds would cut the personnel to the barest minimum. A minimum which was not adequate to the task which was ours. Admittedly we got through O.K. but it was nevertheless risky to say the least. Beginning with four Sigs at each Coy, at one stage this quota had been cut to one Sig at Don Coy, and two at other Coys. It would not be a hard job to train and carry ten additional Sigs.

Then we find the efficiency of the Sigs dependant upon the quality and quantity of the Sig gear available. My comment made on this merely concerns the gear of this Bn. I do not know the condition of the various branches of the 9th Div.

Australia is justly proud of her achievements in armament manufacture, but it is impossible to understand why we cannot get any cable laying or rewinding gear whatsoever. The only cable laying and rewinding apparatus this Bn. possesses is captured Japanese gear. That is gear adequate to the requirements of these conditions of course. Prior to obtaining this we were forced to cut sticks and push them through awkward, heavy drums - then lay out and reel in as best as conditions would allow. The inconvenience is not the point. The ensuing slowness was a resultant slowing up of the advancing coys. Obviously a weakness which could easily be rectified. Strapped on the back, allowing both hands freedom of movement is the apparent answer to this jungle country.

Cables Lessons, too, were learned in the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of cables we had at our disposal. These, incidentally, are definitely superior to any of the Japanese cable yet encountered.

DOM III Advantages: most reliable - hard to break reasonably hard to bare - moisture resisting.

Disadvantages: Hardly any. It is heavy and awkward merely because of lack of carrying gear.

American Twisted ASSAULT (Metallic). Advantages: Light to work excellent for advances, Bn. to Coys. etc. moisture resist.

Disadvantages. Not durable - not good for recovering (kinks) If in a static position for any length of time it is advisable to replace with DOM III. Metallic not necessary here.

Cadmium Copper Combat Cable. Advantages. Extremely light to work - excellent for Patrol work.

Disadvantages. Easily broken and bared. Not durable. High resistance over long distance.

(cont. over leaf)

When we were camped at Wallgrove I offered to design a carrier, adapted from plans I had of the excellent German carrier and at my own cost have it built at largest Eng. Firm in Southern Hemisphere. I was friends with, and previously worked under Chief Designing Engineer. So had expert backing. Mr. Hughes whom I approached said cable would not be used in N.G. I had no authority - or incentive to continue.

page 4

In the early stages of the campaign, cable, mainly for speed, was run along tracks. However with much traffic to follow, particularly Bulldozers, it was soon learned to be a much better proposition to take it clear of the tracks and string it up off the wet ground by means of "til backs" on the many trees available.

Even in this a mistake was found and accordingly rectified. Lines were typed clear of the tracks all right, but tied in bunches, once again in pursuit of speed. However induction proved nearly as troublesome, and far more consistent than the up till then main bogey - Bulldozers which made an unholy mess of lines. However, spacing of the strung up lines soon remedied the worst of the induction. The lesson here is obvious. Place well spaced lines above and clear of tracks.

Another urgent need is an insulating tape adapted to the extreme conditions prevailing here. The old style insulating tape which has stood the Sigs in good stead for so many years is unfortunately defeated by the conditions of this country, for invariably it becomes sodden with rain and, losing its adhesiveness, unrolls itself from joints and leaves "bares" which are in constant danger of shorting.

Wireless Sets Wireless Sets have caused more than their share of trouble in New Guinea.

The Mk. 2 1108 I consider a proven failure owing to its low output and the general screening of the country.

Walkie-Talkies I consider still hold possibilities in our cause of their apparent failure - misuse. Instead of these sets being entrusted to the care of Sigs who understood their characteristics, they were handed to men who, through no fault of their own, did not understand them. I refer to men in sections, Patrols etc. Because of their ignorance, aereals were left up, users not aware that the elevating and depressing of the aerial automatically switched the



page 9

batteries on and off. An enlightening instance of this is given by a C. Coy Sig. who knew of the Aerial Switch, and also knew the frequency of these sets to be determined by a specially ground crystal. One day, the Sig, seeing a set lying on the ground with the aerial still elevated, remarked to the operator: "you'll run those batteries down." "Oh no," returned the operator, "these have no batteries, they're Crystal Sets!" And that, I'm afraid, was the fate of many a Walkie Talkie.

Admittedly they are up against the same screening bogey as the 108; however they are light to carry and could be used on short patrols where heavy Dorn V Telephones are now used - plus the ~~laying~~ laying of a line - sometimes for a matter of a couple of hundred yards.

Dorn V Telephone Definitely a good phone and superior to the gap. However its unnecessarily heavy metal case, open as it is to the wet, could well be changed for a light waterproof case (bakelite perhaps) the superiority of the German phone is well marked in this respect.

Pliers Admittedly Pliers should not be lost - but in this type of country they are. Ammo or arms lost in action are replaced, but Pliers are not. Consequently the Sig has a hard job to repair lines.

The Rifle I would not like to travel far in this Country without a weapon. However the Rifle is a definite drawback to a Sig and his work. With two hands engaged laying a line he has to carry his rifle over his shoulder. Consequently, on particularly on patrol work it gets caught on everything imaginable. Once again this is not suggested for comfort, as the ensuing noise created may jeopardise the lives of the men and the object of the patrol.

SECURITY In conclusion of the Sig Side I would like to offer a few words on Security - or rather the lack of it. Our "G" Officer, Mr. Murray may recall the night I endeavored to obtain information for him, re gap landing Nth of Murfield from a Bde Sig. For twenty minutes I "pumped" him for information. Ultimately I got it for Mr. Murray, only after the Sig had ascertained the name etc. of Mr. Murray. That Sig observed Security to the letter. However, being on the phone on many occasions ~~about~~ during and in between operations I heard many strictly official messages passed. This is quite in order if the Sig (provided trustworthy of course) and the men it is intended for are the only ones to hear it. However in more than one position, owing to the essential overcrowding of lines, I have known dozens of people from Bn. to Coys, Pltms, Sections and various other points such as Beck etc, all with access to the ops orders going over. Even this may be OK - I do not know, but I do know many of these lines ran through enemy territory, or territory accessible to the enemy. Whether those lines were ever tapped we do not know. This type of thing hardly makes for Security of information.

AUTOMATIC WEAPONS Another outstanding lesson we have all learned is the extreme touchiness of certain types of automatic weapons - particularly the Owen. A suggestion to counter this is to have the action cocked with the magazine carried in the hip pocket. I think the magazine can be removed from the pocket, clamped into position in very nearly the same time as it takes to cock and adjust the safety catch. The obvious remedy is the addition of a simple safety catch which clamps the cocking handle.

Fox Holes The anti-climax of the Finsenbagen campaign — the sudden drive back by the Japanese towards the coast, indeed taught a sound lesson. After days of tough fighting to oust the enemy from his strong, fortified fox-holes, it was indeed hard to see him ~~was~~ walk back into these prepared positions. Perhaps in the future it would be profitable to "blow" these positions and so prevent a repetition of the above mentioned. The necessity of occupying taken ground was also well illustrated

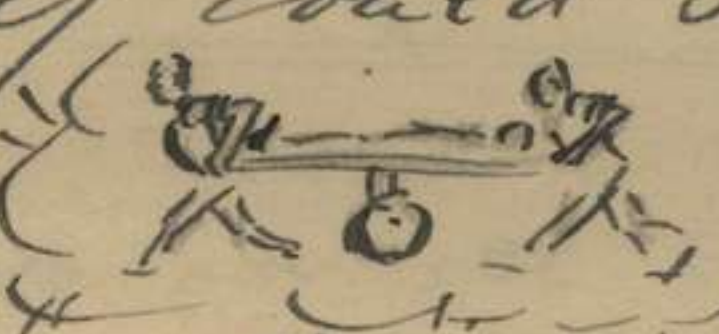
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Rations Though at times the food portion was anything but bright, I hesitate to comment on this because of the extremely difficult job of carrying supplies. Rather would I confine any criticism to the Operational Rations supplied. Several of the contents of these are excellent. However, on a whole I do not think they measure up to the excellent American Ration. It is significant that these, like ours are manufactured in Australia.  
Turned Heat valuable.

Health Perhaps on no other battle field in the world is physical fitness so necessary as it is here, mainly because of the prevalence of various types of diseases which, if contacted, invariably forces the victim out for a period — often for many weeks. The advent of "Atebrin" to our daily lives was at first nothing more than a novelty. However I think the majority of men have learned to respect and rely on the "little yellow pill" (over)

with the screw-driver top" I only know of 18  
one death in this Bn. from Malaria. There  
may be more, I do not know. But I do know  
in the case of this man, he repeatedly refused  
to take atebum, with tragic results. Undoubtedly  
Repellant Lotion has proved its worth,  
not only in safeguarding against Malaria,  
but also of great assistance in keeping free  
of Typhus carrying Mites.

Though there has been severe  
cases of Dysentery the number has been  
relatively light for a tropic country. I attribute  
the lightness to the extremely rigid observance  
of the boys in sanitary cleanliness, the  
advent of the new anti-dysentery pills  
and in no small measure to the use, particularly  
in the early stages, of the water sterilizing  
outfit. Obviously the lessons learned here  
have been absorbed by all - strict observance  
of the directions concerned in the use of these  
various aids to fitness.

STRETCHER BEARING Probably one the most  
hardest working and essential men in action  
are the stretcher bearers. Though obviously stretchers  
generally are heavy enough as they are I think  
on many tracks a stretcher of light, reinforced  
aluminium alloy could be constructed with a  
central wheel viz:  which would considerably  
lighten the load and make for speedy  
transport. The fact that many stretchers were had  
to be made from canes suggests a shortage of  
stretchers, and a loss of valuable time.

TACTICS Though the Aust. Soldier undoubtedly  
favors the open type of fighting  
Comparison Jap. v. Aust his versatility is proven in  
the way he has adapted himself to  
the "hide and seek" type of fighting encountered in the  
jungle, and the successes he has thereby

achieved. However it is indeed a clever man who cannot learn something new. Likewise it is a remarkably knowing Army which cannot obtain some new tricks from the opposition. In the case of the Japanese I consider the two items of most value learned are (a) cover from view and (b) from that same cover from view - accurate shooting by snipers. Can we learn anything from these points? Certainly we knew a defending force would use all available cover from view and cover from fire. Also we knew he would have snipers on the job. Obviously we have an effective counter for his cover from ~~view~~ <sup>view</sup> on "shifting" patrols. But have we a counter for snipers? Certainly the spraying of trees etc. with MG's, and Brens and Owens will shift him, but it is nevertheless expensive and immediately discloses our position. Could we not carry snipers also? It seems an anomaly that the Australian Soldier has extensive training in Rifle and Bayonet practice, yet only on rare occasions is he taken to a range and taught accurate shooting. It's strange that you cannot place a finger on any half dozen men and say "they are excellent shots." Generally one has the impression that we are all about on a par as Riflemen in the use of the Rifle - but surely there are outstanding men who, with the natural initiative of the Aust. Soldier, would make valuable snipers and counter snipers?

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ENEMY  
WEAPONS

I would like to suggest that enemy weapons captured in this campaign be shown to the men and the operation of them be explained.

Possibly up to date the occasion has not arisen that his guns be turned effectively upon him. Possibly should the occasion arise our boys could easily manipulate these weapons - I do not know. However in case there's any doubt I thought it may prove profitable to know them.

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In conclusion I can only hope the various items I have criticised may come under the category of constructive and not destructive criticism. As I said at the beginning of this essay I cannot comment on lessons learned in Strategy as a whole, simply because I do not know the facts - facts other than the small items I have touched upon. However I think one fact is obvious to all and that is the undoubted outmanoeuvring by the Commander of this Bde and the <sup>three</sup> ~~three~~ CO's concerned of the enemy, and possibly the main lesson learned, has been learned by the enemy - to his cost.

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NX 85645.  
SIC. TICAE C  
C. Coy

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History in Essay Competition 1842 Sec. 2.

Description of Agency, Landing etc. Lae - Finschhafen  
Amphibious Operations -  
Foreword.

The first portion of this narrative was written before details of the competition were to hand, my intention then being to weave a story into it merely as a little added colour and interest. It will at least do no harm to leave it as such, for, I have arranged it that the essay will scan as a separate writing. Therefore, the previous part can be discarded if so desired.

Prologue. (If possible would like (22 pages).  
Return of manuscript - forms synopsis of story in preparing)

History is funny in its way.

So is ambition. For what is History but realised or thwarted ambition?

Capt. Cook was ambitious. Capt Cook's ambitions were realised - he made history. Some thirty odd years ago, the Kaiser was ambitious. His ambitions were thwarted yet, in the very thwarting of his ambitions history was made. And so we find History as a very funny old Lady indeed. And, no individual ever passes unnoticed beneath her cold, indifferent eyes. Even indifferent, perhaps, to the occasional individual who would stray from the well worn paths of convention and find himself entangled in the drag-net of his own making. Yet, let him stumble back to those self same paths of convention - let him entangle the multitudes into the strands of that net and upset a few old gents of tradition then old Lady History is on the job, and facts are entered in the book of time for students to pore over in the generations to come.

It was in the Autumn of 1907 that Dr Carl Steudzler chose the sight of his new home. For seven weeks now young Carl had sailed the wild New Guinea coastline, and wandered the jungle clad hillsides in search of an ideal spot for his new home and future activities.

Australia, in her peaceful and contented state of sleepiness, was vaguely aware of the string of islands Tropic Isles lying close by her Northern shores. But—why think of them? She had an internal problem of thousands upon thousands of acres of rich unopened land to worry about without thinking about overseas acreages. Besides, they weren't hers. If the mother country was content to leave them idle, why should she trouble her young head over them? Even if she'd known of the entry of yet another German Missionary to New Guinea she would not show any undue concern towards a very insignificant individual in the passing parade. Besides, it was his country—his business.

But what she didn't know was that young Dr. Steudzler was no ordinary individual. She knew not the strange thoroughness and organising ability of Carl Steudzler, missionary and native benefactor...

Small ships began to drift in at frequent intervals, and Steudzler's staff grew overnight. Meetings were held and plans discussed for the future. Often Carl would spread his slim expressive hands and confide to his colleagues: "In New Guinea



my friends, I see no Island sanctuary of untapped wealth - rather do I see it as a key to a place of far greater wealth - a paradise of fools - Australia. As you know, I am in constant touch with the Fatherland, and things are on the move there - moves portending far greater moves than the world has ~~hitherto~~ hitherto seen. Soon, my friends, we shall play our part in that move."

And from there? Well, it's a long story. Suffice to say Dr Stendzler had not allowed for something he could not understand - the spirit of Ungazac. A spirit which thwarted the plans of Stendzler, and in the thwarting - once again History was written.

And Stendzler? No, he did not die as so many of his colleagues did. As I said, History is a funny old Lady. For she was not yet finished with the scheming Doctor. So, she treated him kindly and showed him safe passage to a haven of rest where he may spend his days as missionary and native benefactor. This spot the old Lady will blazon in her book of time as Hopoi, found somewhere between Lal and Froth Fenschhafen . . .

Came the summer of that momentous year, 1939, when the whole world had suddenly turned into a seething cauldron of unrest, conjecture, and awakening. Once more the ageing Dr. Stendzler saw a vast expanse of far-reaching opportunities spread like

page 4

a magic carpet before his ambitious,  
greedy eyes, and a hate born of  
frustration boiled within him.

Once more the little ships  
drifted to the beaches by his home.

Strange, ugly craft, teeming with yellow  
skinned men. Stendzler was puzzled,  
and not a little disturbed. Was fate  
destined to play yet another trump  
card against him, this time from a quite  
unexpected quarter?

Stendzler's thoughts were  
abruptly interrupted by the sound of  
feet crunching on the gravel path leading  
to the front door of his bungalow.

Rising from his cane chair he moved  
to the doorway and found himself  
confronted with by a yellow faced, keen  
eyed man.

"Herr Doktor Stendzler?"

The lips of the yellow man  
had hardly showed any movement,  
yet the words, uttered in perfect  
German, seemed to snap out with  
an air of authority.

Stendzler was taken  
aback. There was something funny here.  
He hesitated. The man before him  
grunted and without awaiting a reply,  
fished a bulky, official looking

package from an inside pocket  
and handed it to Stendzler. His beady  
slant eyes seemed to burn into  
Stendzler as he took the package.

The yellow man saw the grey heavy,  
gripping eyebrows of Stendzler arch  
in surprise as he read the inscription  
on the package. Abruptly Stendzler's expression  
changed, and, turning on heel, he moved back  
into the shade of his bungalow.

And so, the cold, calculating eyes of Lady History were to see, in the months to come, the furtive, feverish shaping of a 'key' to unlock the back door on Australia. Not idle in all this activity was Dr Stradler under the watchful eye of his new master - Aurokita. True, he had qualms as news of the gallant, six and seventh Divs torturous push over the Owen Stanley Ranges seeped through. Occasionally on my hand would grasp his ageing heart as the trees seemed to rustle uneasily under the invisible hand of some seemingly long dead spirit - a spirit which he, nor all the powers on earth could hold back - a revved spirit of Anzac. Then he would comfort himself. Things were different this time. Had he not a fortress on either side of him? Fortresses these mad Australians or their Yankee allies would never penetrate - Lae and Finschhafen.

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(The connecting link of this story will be found within the Essay. The conclusion at the end of the Essay)

Actual Essay - Read in conjunction with or  
separately from Prologue on preceding pages.

Operations - Landings - Lae - Finschhafen.

Signs of activity were evident in the many scattered camps of the 9th Div AIF, situated as they were in the more open palm studded, near shore plantations and the more heavily wooded hillsides overlooking the bay from which, in the very near future we would be embarking for distant shores in the new role of amphibious troops. We, of the 9th Div, erstwhile desert fighters as amphibious troops! Somehow it seemed so strange and unreal. Though we had trained as such for weeks it was still somehow hard to realise.

Some days of sitting about in groups learning of the difficulties which would confront us in the actual operations. Discussions of the more immediate problems of getting men and materials along the slimy, muddy roads to the various types of waiting landing craft.

For here, in the steamy sodden depths of New Guinea it is not only the enemy we have to contend with, for as big if not bigger problem is the handling of climatic conditions which this unfriendly land seems destined to hurl into the face of all who would dare intrude on her green virginity.

However, she counted not on the Spirit of Anzac, and though this may appear merely as some inherent quality referred to in some vague manner by Journalists at odd times it invariably

comes out under the most trying conditions — under the much more formal cloak of will-power — a will-power which soon found expression in Bull Dozers as they chewed and scooped at the clinging mud and bending roots — clearing new tracks for the gear-laden trucks jeeps and lorries to load the waiting craft.

Then the long expected day of departure. Hurried but methodical "striking" of camp. A seething mass of green-clad figures in the early morning light, each and everyone busy on his own particular job. Last minute packing of gear, and an occasional groan as little items of comfort we had all accumulated in our stay there were tossed to the scrap heap — too heavy to carry.

Finally, the unforgettable march down the sloppy, treacherous roadway, made anything but comfortable by the steady down pour of rain. At last on the beach. Men talking and laughing despite the miserable conditions. Here and there a sudden curse as men endeavoured to roll a cigarette in the wet. And here, in itself you have an example of ~~the~~ the spirit of these men. Surely a paradox if ever there was one! For nowhere will you find more cheerful men than these — yet they are not happy unless there is something to moan about! What more apt summing up could you have than the statement during the last war by a high ranking British, I think, officer who remarked: "The Australian soldier is the biggest moaner in the world. But — while they are moaning they're doing things!"

A few hundred - 1000  
A few hundred yards, down beach from  
where we sat, remarkable L.S.T.'s - fully  
fledged though ugly ships which ride  
the high seas, and yet will glide up  
on a beach as a light ten footer  
launch might - were lying side by  
side like grotesque monsters with  
jaws wide open, ~~so~~ greedily sucking  
in heavily laden trucks - bulldozers  
- and guns. These were our travelling  
supply lines - supply lines we  
would be so dependant on in the  
days to come for such essentials as  
food, ammunition and medical supplies

Abruptly our thoughts were  
diverted as L.C.I.'s - our transports - came  
into sight, manoeuvred into position  
and glided onto the beach, so much like  
sinister sharks of prey - with a butter-  
knife strapped to their backs! In effect  
highly placed conning towers. Then an  
abrupt metallic clang as steel ramps  
on either side of the nose, dropped to  
the sand - our stairways to the deck  
and thence to the various holds.

Once up the ramp with  
your heavy load of gear, you  
manoeuvre carefully along the steel,  
slippery deck, guide your hanging  
gear through a small doorway and  
slowly descend an almost perpen-  
dicular steel ladder to the small  
hold beneath. Here, practically the  
whole space is taken up with collapsible  
bunks - three above each other. Gladly  
you slip off your gear, dump it on  
the floor and crawl into a bunk - dripping  
water the while. And there, my reader,  
you are left to your thoughts for  
many hours to come. In the meantime

ramps are hauled up - orders shouted, and, as you feel the whole craft quiver you know the journey has begun. Once more you are left to your thoughts. Have you ever been left to your thoughts for a long stretch of time? If so you may grasp the atmosphere of those little ships. Not morbid, demoralized type of thinking mind you, but men quietly thinking of many things. How can any one individual delve into the minds of hundreds of men and honestly claim to put those thoughts into words? But you do feel the atmosphere, and know they are chock full of confidence and determination. Possibly the most notable feature is the complete absence of swagger or over confidence on the part of these veterans. They know the road will be hard - and are ready for it.

Then comes our holds turn up top for a spell of fresh air. I shall never forget that view, just on sundown, as the ships string out in long lines and settle to the journey ahead. Somehow, we felt immensely proud of our Navy and our force as we sailed serenely on. Somehow we felt very close indeed to the other two arms of the service as we spotted fighter planes hovering overhead, and felt the comfortable closeness of gently dipping and deadly looking destroyers.

Naturally, up to date I have merely recorded events which I was primarily concerned in, such as life on the L.C.I.s. However this is but a part of the big convoy, and

Unfortunately I have not travelled  
on either A.P.D.'s (altered pattern

(Army Pattern Destroyers which sneak  
close in shore and drop barges loaded  
with men to rush the beaches) or  
the aforementioned L.S.T.'s, the "big boys."

However the mates who have  
travelled by these pay the highest  
tribute to the American Sailors aboard.  
Generous to a fault, they always  
supplied our troops with excellent  
meals, plus generous gifts of  
cigarettes, etc. This spontaneous  
gesture has gained the appreciation  
of all who travelled with them. Far dankum  
Thanks Guy!

Early next morning, we  
reached our first port of call. However,  
this was merely a very welcome "leg-  
stretcher" - a day at a rather  
inviting little spot of which, as in  
the case of our embarkation point, I am  
not at liberty to name. I shall not  
weary you with superfluous details  
of our stay there. Suffice to say we  
"hogged" the tucker and canteen stuff  
available there!

That night, as we once  
more cruised along, we were given the  
"guts" as it is called. In short,  
told where we were going - the approx.  
time of landing, and the possibilities.  
Our main landing force would land at  
"Red Beach" - the Battalion I was  
part of would form a bridgehead and  
drive inland from another beach, named  
for the operation as "Yellow Beach".  
Should the main body then strike



heavy opposition and failed to land they would be able to come in behind us and drive through. Satisfied we had finally learnt details of the job, we settled down for the night — and sleep.

All too soon our sleeping hours were over, and, sleepy eyed, we awoke to the sound of a tin panican rattling against a metal pail.

"Come and get your cup of coffee." a voice echoed dully along the dark passageway.

Followed a clatter of iron studded boots on the steel floor of the hold, and in a few minutes we were pouring hot coffee down rather dry throats. Then came a hurried sorting of gear, and all were ready for what was to come.

Perhaps I was fortunate in being up on deck just prior to, and during the landing, and I think anyone so placed could never quite forget <sup>the</sup> ~~sight~~ <sup>sights</sup> presented. What paradoxes we find in war! Anyone who says there is any beauty in any aspect of war has surely not experienced any of them. However it's strangely true that occasionally we see sights which very closely approach scenes of beauty — were they only free from the depth of sinisterness and pending destruction! The initial stages of the landing near Lal presented many such contrasts. Picture if you can the grey dawn — a heavy blue black sea; sleek grey ships of war slipping silently through the waves. The whole

set off by the purple, cloud topped mountains of the not far distant shore. All is quiet - just another day dawning...

Then, in abrupt, direct contrast destroyers come to resounding life as spurts of flame shoot out from their suddenly listing decks...

The ominous quiet is broken as tho' by thunder. You switch your position and stare shorewards. Spurts of flame and puffs of black smoke appear mysteriously right along the tree fringed beach... Then you realise the good ranging and accuracy of the shots.

After that the whole scene suddenly seems to transform into something like a surrealist's nightmare. Destroyers are still spitting sulphur yellow flame. - APDs catch your eye and you see barges already making for the beach... sailors brush past making ready for our landing. Hell! We'd forgotten our part for the moment! You stumble slightly as the nose of the craft bites into the sand and abruptly comes to a rest. There's a sudden clang. You know what it is but oddly enough you jump at any sound in those tense moments just prior to landing. The ramps going down! Before going down you glance apprehensively at the thick, dark jungle growth fringing the beach. What does that dark foliage hide? machine guns -

Abruptly your thoughts switch back to the ramps. It's vacant. Your turn! Just ahead a man is

struggling towards the beach, with waves breaking just below his armpits. You plough in after him and make for the shore. You hardly believe your luck as no hot lead comes flying your way. You're in the cover of the trees, wet with sea water - and sweat, pressing on towards the first objective. Abruptly Tojo introduces himself. There's a crash of exploding bombs, and you glance up at the sound of planes. Through a break in the foliage overhead you glimpse two low wing monoplanes flash by. "Zeroes!" you hear someone remark. Then a little later the comforting sight of a string of Lightnings wing over.

Time drags by, and at last news trickles through that all companies have reached their first objectives. With fingers that tremble a little you roll a cigarette, light it and inhale deeply. We had landed at Lae! - Or to be more precise just west of Lae.

There is not a great deal to tell of the particular job played done by this Bn. at Lae and surrounding points, except perhaps a story of hard work and long marches. During the days that followed all companies advanced to their ultimate objectives without striking any sort of organised resistance. Unfortunately the gaps had too much start and we were able

Probably one of most outstanding impressions gained at first sight of his camps is the filthy, animal like living conditions which must prevail amongst them. Inadvertently it was at one of these camps I picked up a small German\* volume. Why I shoved it into my haversack I do not know. Possibly merely a sidelight on the insatiable thirst for conveniences. However, at the time I little realised the import of the secret it held. The camp was a one time mission centre, and our presence there is explained by a move from Yellow Beach to extend and hold the extreme right flank. The name of the mission was — Hopoi... Here an aged grey haired man was questioned and subsequently held. At the time I did not know his name, and, truth to tell I was not particularly interested. Later news leaked out that he was a German, and was held because of the conflicting information he imparted.

And so the days sped by with little more than hit-ruin raids by boys. I do believe damage and casualties were inflicted at Red Beach. Also information came to hand that opposition had been encountered on the main Diverional landing there — with unfortunate results for the Japanese opposition. However, I was not there and accordingly cannot offer any authentic details.

Eventually we were relieved at Hopoi by a militia Bn. and moved back to Yellow Beach, en route for a flat out drive on Lal. Those who took part in that march from Yellow Beach towards Lal are unlikely to forget it in a hurry and though

\* The German volume having a direct bearing on the Prologue and conclusion of this narrative

our Bn. did little actual fighting<sup>15</sup> at Loe, this march must surely feature as one of the outstanding achievements of the campaign. In this march we carried full gear plus operational gear, such as mortars, m.g.'s and big gear, over sand and muddy roads for a distance of something like twenty five thousand yards in the day. This, under tropical conditions, was anything but easy. How we were "done up" at the end of it! I shall never forget the logical remark made by Mick Emmet as he staggered up to a little group of Y.M.C.A. or Salvation Army men who were busily engaged serving coffee to the grateful men as they passed by. Red in the face and dripping sweat, as indeed we all were, Mick glanced at the battered drum of coffee, then, looking up at the man ~~seemingly~~ filling his mug, he said: "Brother, that's worth two Cathedrals!" And candidly, though opinions will differ on this, right then I think he voiced the opinion of many men.

Actually we were close behind the forward Bns. in the drive on Loe.

Being reserved Bn. that was our job. Had the job been stickier then another story would have been written. As subsequent events proved, the forward Bns were more than a match for the Japanese defenders. There is another epic story of advances under the most trying of conditions — advances made possible by sheer courage and "guts". Evidence of their deadly work was seen in the groups of dead Japs scattered along the tracks into Loe . . .

The forward elements of these Bns. reached Loe but a short time before the entry of the forward portion of the 7th Div. who had previously been driving up on Loe from the other side.

16

For a few days after the Lae show we rested, then details were given us of another landing in the immediate future. Two amphibious landings in three weeks was rather a tall order. However the boys, with thoughts of home and leave, were only too anxious to get the job over and done with.

And so, late one afternoon we marched to a beach in preparation for embarkation preceding our amphibious assault on Finschhafen. As I said, it was late afternoon, and already the light was fading rapidly. With Landing Craft drawn up all along the beach, many more cruising slowly out at sea, and the beach crammed with men and gear it was certainly an ideal opportunity for Tojo, and he was not slow to grasp it. Our first intimation of trouble was in sight of nine bombers approaching at a high altitude. Next moment dozens of ships were pumping a veritable stream of lead and shells at them. Abruptly the bombers changed course and for some unknown reason (probably the barrage) dropped their bombs on the much more scattered target out at sea. From what we could see, little or no damage was done and the raid ended as abruptly as it had begun.

But though we had not suffered by the raid it nevertheless did anything but boost our morale, for if he had not guessed our next move, he surely knew it now! And, with airfields within eighty miles of Finschhafen, well — !

I shall not weary you with details of the journey. Suffice to say it was more or less a repetition of the voyage to Lae, with the exception of being smaller, for this was to be a Brigade show, our Bde. — 20th. Also it was one hop — overnight.

17  
However, that is as far as it goes. The landing unfortunately being no repetition of ~~the~~ Yellow Beach. First of all there was an error in the ~~landing~~ somewhere and we were landed in the wrong place. Landedly I do not know the facts and thereby do not feel competent to even comment on it. I do know we were landed on a strange coastline in darkness and to pin-point a spot some fifty odd miles from the starting point and land men right on this spot, in darkness, would indeed be a phenomenal achievement.

Owing to this error, our barges from the A.P.D.'s which normally would have landed some twelve minutes before the L.C.I.s to clear and consolidate near shore position preparatory to the arrival of the main landing force, were landed farther down the coast. Accordingly, the L.C.I.s were forced to take the brunt of the enemies fire which spouted venomously from the dark wall of the jungle.

It was one landing very few of us will forget. As we hit the water and waded ashore, we could see men lying in groups along the beach. In the grey, near dawn light it presented a morbid, uncanny sight, our first impression being that they were all either dead or wounded. At this stage we were not fully aware of the mix up, and naturally we thought it they were the men from the A.P.D.'s who, upon striking heavy opposition, had failed to penetrate the enemies defences. To heighten the illusion, I as a B.H.Q. Sig knew that I was one of the first off the L.C.I. and, seeing there was already a good number of men on the beach...

What we did not know until later was that Don Coy. of the 17th Bn, which should have landed lower down the beach, had landed on our task spot and were now mixed up with us.

Abruptly our Sgt. ordered us to ground and down we went to the sands awash with the surf. Dimly I was aware of seawater washing over my boots and swirling round my chest.

Someone nearby, someone groaned, and glancing quickly to my right I saw the inert figure of a man, face towards the still visible stars, a stained hand resting on his chest. . . . a little farther down from him lay another man, gently rocking back and forth to the rhythmic beat of the surf. . . .

"Poor devils," you think, then "Thank God," as a crawling figure looms up out of the lifting veil of darkness. A stretcher bearer! you shudder a little as he merely glances at the gently rocking one, for already he is in hands far greater than any mere humans. Next moment he is by the side of one who is not beyond his aid.

Perhaps I may be accused, here, of dramatising on the morbid side. If so, I offer but one comment.

How, in this narrative, in presenting impressions of the full operations can one possibly overlook the invaluable work, under actual fire, done by the humble stretcher bearer - our first aid man? For, what more unpleasant yet essential job is there?

The troops, previously thought to be wounded or dead, abruptly came to life and edged forward. Our Sgt rose to a stooped position and in a crouching sort of run, moved several yards up the beach. Came a fresh



...applied he dropped <sup>19</sup>  
being right behind him we  
do likewise. He had got  
piece of shrapnell in his wrist. Roughly  
bandaging it, he rose, and we followed  
into the shadow of the trees. He in  
turn was close behind our C.O. and 2/PIC.

I was with B.H.Q. the whole  
of the time and therefore I cannot give  
an authentic account of the movements of  
our forward troops. Suddenly, by this time  
the men had been organised as effectively  
as circumstances would permit, and though  
arrangements had gone a little astray there  
was no sign of panic. There was plenty  
of evidence of our forward troops activity  
in the harsh sound of spasmodic bursts  
of small arms fire in the depths of the jungle  
ahead. The fact too, of the enemy still  
returning our fire was evident in the  
occasional and urgent call for stretcher  
bearers, and now and then the zip! of  
a stray bullet whistling past us.

~~At this time~~

Half an hour or so later,  
the C.O. directed us to a more forward  
position. Here our hands were absorbed  
on the job of setting up the switch board  
— getting lines in from companies and  
generally establishing communication  
between B.H.Q. and the companies.

## THE PREPARATION FOR AND THE LANDING AT LAE

For weeks past we'd been training - training hard in something that was quite new to us all. We'd fought the Italians & Germans in Tobruk, patrolled no-man's-land at night. Broken the German defence line at Alamein, taken machine gun ports at the point of our bayonets, beaten off fierce counter attacks with tanks & artillery but now we were training for a totally different war. Invading Japanese held territory by sea.

At first we were not too keen on the idea. To jump off a barge on a beach that would probably be defended by enemy machine gun ports was something that didn't appeal to us very much. However we'd overcome difficulties before & our training both in Australia & at Milne Bay helped to give us great confidence in the job that lay ahead.

We all knew that very soon the Division which had made such a name for itself on "the other side" would soon be called upon to keep up its reputation against the Jap.

To land by sea would add still another page to the book of the Division's history. Not since our fore-fathers landed at Gallipoli

2/

Had an Australian Force made an opposed landing by sea. Could we, the 2nd A.I.F. uphold the gallantry shown by those men?

Rumours were many & varied amongst the boys as each one tried to pick the particular spot we were to invade. Salamaua, Lae, Madang, Uewak & even Rabaul were among the "Furphy's" created as each individual gave his particular bit of "guts". Someone just heard this from the "big" batman or I heard the adjutant say to the C.O.

Gradually our departure from Milne Bay drew nearer. Amphibious ~~training~~ landings had been practised both by day & by night so each man knew & carried out his particular task with clock work precision. Every man determined that when the great day came through no fault of his own would there be any failure or mishap.

Sand tables were made & photographs of the exact spot where we were to land were shown to each man, setting out what each unit or sub-unit job would be.

Behind all this preparation by actual combat troops was the great problem of supplies. It was fully realised that supply barges would not be able to land until some time after the first

3/2

Troops were arched. Troops must eat & they also must have ammunition for their weapons. Things were worked out to a scale so that each man would be self reliant for at least twenty-four hours & longer if need be.

A few days before our departure from Milne Bay each brigade was called together on a brigade parade & addressed by the Corp Commander Lieutenant General Herring & our Divisional commander Major General Wootten. In a few well chosen words General Herring welcomed us to the New Guinea Forces. He gave us a brief outline on what had taken place in New Guinea since it was first invaded by the Japanese. Explaining later on what part we were to play in future operations to rid the island of the enemy. He asked us to place our faith in the Fifth Air Force & to give them all the support it was possible for us to give. Saying "you'll find they will not let you down. From a few planes they have gradually built themselves into a formidable striking force." Never did a man speak such true words as we were to learn later on. For seldom if ever have troops been given so much support from the air. Enemy planes were completely

grounded because of the constant bombing & strafing of the enemy 'dromes by our planes.

It is interesting to note at this stage that the ground where this parade was held was the actual battle ground where the 18th Brigade inflicted their crushing defeat on an invading Japanese force. But what a change had taken place since then. Where once there had been a battle ground covered with dense jungle was now transformed into an airfield capable of holding hundreds of planes.

So thorough was our training & with everyone so conversant with what we had to do we were sure that when we did meet the enemy they'd be completely annihilated.

At last orders were issued to the effect that in a day or so we'd be striking camp. All surplus clothing was handed in. Personal belongings were to be packed in our service pack. For the first time in our varied careers they were to be left behind. We had learned that it's best to travel light. Everything depends on speed & freedom of movement in jungle warfare & we were not going to be hampered by any excess clothing or personal belongings.

5/2

For those among us who had not yet seen action there was indeed a tense feeling. Even the veterans of desert campaigns felt a new tingle in their veins. For here was something new, something totally different. Now before had men been so well prepared or felt so confident as to what the outcome would be.

The day of departure arrived. A typical New Guinea day. As we waited close to the beach for our boats to pull in it began to rain steadily, but if our clothes & bodies were dampened our spirits were still high & dry.

To us it was not an unfamiliar sight but yet one of great inspiration as the large conveyer of ships of all sizes & descriptions pulled into the open sea, leaving behind the magnificent harbor of Milne Bay. As we leaned on the rail & watched the hills surrounding the picturesque Bay slowly fade into the background many minds were far away.

Once aboard we were told that some time the following day we would have a few hours ashore before finally embarking on our way for the actual show. We pulled in at Buna early next morning & went ashore for breakfast. Much to our joy we found the port-men had been good to us, for

There were bags of mail & a few parcels waiting for us. Next to his leave the Australian soldier values most of all his mail. Not his leave as a great many would have us believe. Mail day for the troops is indeed one of great rejoicing. For here we receive word from the ones most near & dear to us. Those who we volunteered to fight for.

We remained on shore only a few hours & after another hot meal embarked for our final destination.

When we had again settled down on board Coy commanders, Platoon commanders & men were issued with final instructions & disclosure (what until now had been kept secret) the name of the place we were to land.

We were to land on the northern side of Lae. The 15th & 17th Battalions forming a bridge head for the 24th & 26th Brigades on a beach known as "Red Beach". We, the 13th Battalion were to land about three miles further north on "Yellow Beach", thereby giving protection to the "right" flank of the Division.

It was not expected that we'd strike heavy opposition, although a patrol boat had paid the area a visit the previous night & had been fired upon by a heavy machine gun but it was not known whether the enemy would be there.

7  
in strength to meet us.

So the great armada of ships sailed on unopposed by the enemy either by sea or from the air, a fact that indeed was very encouraging. We fully realized an attack from either of these enemy forces was not entirely impossible but indeed very probable. But our air force kept the sea lanes open & not until after we had landed was an enemy plane sighted.

Salamana was at this time still an important base held by the Japanese. When it is realized that a convoy of over one hundred ships passed within a few miles of such a large enemy base without being attacked it is indeed a great feat.

Down in the holds of the L.C.I.S that night not many slept very soundly. The excitement of what the dawn would bring was too much even for the most seasoned old veteran. Long before dawn men were moving about on deck & in the dim light we could see the dim outline of the coast now not so very far away.

The ship's bell rang. The signal that in half an hour we would be landing. All men were ordered below to put on their equipment & prepare for the landing.



Boen & some gunners gave their weapons a final check. Rifle men loaded their magazines & fixed their bayonets. A man came down from on deck & said B & C Coys were loading into the barges from off the A.P.D.s in a few minutes now they would be speeding towards the shore closely followed by H & D Coys & the L.C.I.S.

The men were a little nervous from the destroyer's great roar. Just how had come. In the hold of our L.C.I.S. For it's a new experience for all to be crossing the start line straight from a boat. The feelings of the boys are mixed & nervous. Some of the old campaigners are suddenly quiet, their minds going back to other battles fought & won. One of the boys wishing to break the tense atmosphere commences to whistle a few bars of a familiar little ditty, some of his mates joining him a hand by busting into song but through the minds of us all ran the one thought. Would the Jap be there to meet us.

The sound of the ramps being lowered reach us & in the space of seconds we were raising up the beach - much to our disappointment (or relief) there is no opposition. Cutting our way through thick jungle & after

2/10  
wading through a swamp waist deep in water  
we "dig in" for the first time on New Guinea  
soil some five hundred yards from the shore

The 13th Bn. are in action again prepared to  
give the Japanese what they gave the Hun at  
alamin

NX35845.

Pvt J. W. Lamb.

"A" Coy

Lessons Learned

Fernhafen Campaign

Sept - Oct. 43.

NK14894  
Lgthg News

1.

Finchhoffer, for 20 km, can be likened to Post 33 of Tobruk & Alamain. Both the latter were milestones in our education. Post 33 told us the Hun was human & beatable. Alamain told us how hard he was to beat, & what a modern war, between modern armies, was like.

Finch. has been our first serious contact with the Jap. - a fanatical animal like fighter, merciless, brave, cunning, a real horror man, we were told. Those of us who remember the early M.E. days, can recall a similarity in the then description of the Hun.

As at Post 33, so here, we have discovered our enemy to be human and beatable. Even more than that we find him to be superior to our Joe of Tobruk, lacking the

Western ~~the~~ intelligence, the ability to fight back, the power of re-organisation after a crisis.

For the purpose of clarity it is proposed to sub-group, not necessarily in any specifically considered order of importance.

### The Enemy

A more animal, than man type of individual, possessing often an uncanny ability to appreciate ground & sight his position accordingly. Well trained to hold his fire until our men are practically upon him, an excellent camouflage of position helping him here. Has ability to fight good rearward actions, with only use of small parties for delaying purposes. Prepared to and does fight well & fearlessly while in prepared positions, but

here his tenacity finishes. Deprived  
 of a fox-hole, suddenly placed in  
 an impromptu undug position, having  
 been recently unloosed from dug  
 positions, Nippo is at his worst.  
 Lack of any powers of re-organisation  
 or improvisation tell clearly against  
 him. His troops have a singular  
 mind, a singular objective, & so a  
 singular plan to that objective. Thrust  
 in this plan, disorganised & helpless, they  
 become an easy prey for desultory  
 troops. Given to panic, cases have  
 been known of soldiers & M. G. ~~men~~  
 lying at pit bottoms, fleeing skywards.  
 Heavy pressure, with mortar & arty H.E.  
 support, invariably causes withdrawal  
 even from splendidly situated defensive  
 localities. Lt. F. ~~sub.~~ has exhibited  
 an amazing lack of appreciation  
 of potentialities of mortar support.

That lack of appreciation, and not weight  
 in supply must be his reason for  
 their absence, since innumerable  
 heavy M. G's, ~~from~~ with heavy ammo.  
 usage, form a part of standard equipment.

Japanese field hygiene does not  
 exist. Latrines are unknown, refuse  
~~is scattered~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> buried, ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> buried, ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup>  
 merely a thin covering with earth.  
 Our own dead can lie within a  
 few yards of his posts, exposed by him.  
 This unpleasing animal like mode, <sup>is</sup> seen  
 in the continued use of a track  
 or area, despite fatal casualties to  
 all previous transgressors. Seems  
 possessed of a vicious detached  
 inhuman appreciation of dead, a  
 which is of use only as an active  
 combatant. ~~Thoughts~~ <sup>Thoughts</sup>, emotions  
 feelings, for the dead comrade, depart  
 as with his spirit.

When not in active contact with the enemy, has extremely low energy system. Quiet & wide-awake best patrols invariably dispatch a careless track sentry.

### Topography

We have found that tracks always follow ridges, especially razor back type. That is impossible owing to restriction of usage to obtain any accurate picture of any area of jungle. Ground, features, etc. must be left to unfold themselves as one progresses. Distance becomes misjudged. Used as our focus are to the desert, finding themselves hemmed & shut in by jungle, we are prone to over imagine our individual force's isolation. We have not, as yet, fully appreciated the fact that jungle is as much our salvation as our enemy. Our recent clearing operations



have been somewhat of a revelation  
 as to how close, now tho cleared,  
 different defensive positions, previously  
 thought somewhat isolated, really are.

### Supply - Relations

Supply raised its ugly head  
 properly for the first occasion in  
 any of our campaigns here at Fench.  
 In the Buni River encircling operation,  
 absence of gaps & narrow, with  
 tortuous mountain climb, our troops  
 had to depend upon themselves for  
 supply. We felt, such was the physical  
 ordeal, that what we carried, must have  
 the optimum nutritional value to  
 our forces in the food aspect.  
 Wastage was a greater sin than  
 ever before.

And yet, much of what we have  
 laboriously carried food, was  
 eventually discarded. Again & again

7

~~Before~~ we had to discard large margarine tins,  $\frac{3}{4}$  full, owing to impossibility of carrying in open conditions. Similar trouble was experienced in regard to jam. Troops became stale of bully, lard & biscuits, ~~forgot~~ our major ration - so that many half eaten <sup>tins</sup> of bully & broken biscuits were thrown away.

All this meant wastage. Wastage means increased supply problems, greater fatigue, a lower morale. The Field. Operat. Ration we could not judge, but for its success ~~it~~ essential to have an adequate daily supply of canned food. This also applies to general ration issue. Tea became the life blood of the men. Water need not be boiled to make good tea.

A studied general ration issue, with the object of ensuring what was issued had variety, was palatable, & was obtained in a form the more easily disposed of in one section

meal would do much to meet the situation.

We found French to be a physical war. The quality <sup>& quantity</sup> of our rations was communicated immediately to the quality of our troops, to our mental happiness, to above all, our general morale. In N.G., an Army fights on its stomach, as never before.

### Ammunition

What the 7 Div. told us in regard to this, was fully born out. As with everything which must be carried, wastage is a six.

### General

Our commanders are now faced with a new tactical problem. A decision to attack may often have to be made between choosing a sound tactical route, with poor supply line, to a poor tactical approach, but possessed of a sound supply line.

PL. Cooking

PL. cooking, whenever possible, solves many of our ration problems. It is essential whenever possible, to ensure that all troops have properly cooked meals, not a series of hasty snacks. Troops lose through necessity of dining out among sections, where much offsetting must be done to equalise. It simplifies PL. administration, allows troops to carry out a hard or long patrol, strengthened with the knowledge that a good meal awaits them on return. It fosters the all essential PL spirit, which culminates into community provision of additional cooking facilities, such as ovens, & so improved cooking. ~~It~~ Permits PL. Comd., by liaison with PL. cook, to have actual supervision of PL. rations, ensuring balanced meals.

, both regards quality + quantity, such as is impossible in sec. working, owing to the supply peculiarities

### Patrols

The very success of these operations depend primarily upon several salient factors.

Silence is essential. Again again our foot scouts, silently moving along tracks have surpassed Jap. track sentries. Our scout's lives depend upon silence, such is the advantage to a pre-warned track sentry.

Maintenance of correct distance is perhaps the hardest task. No hard rule can be laid down as to spacing. Ground, foliage, tracks, all play their part.

Fire sec + Pl. H.Q. should always be well strung out, with remaining sec. grouped in ~~D~~ close formation, thus facilitating the disposal of

PL reserves in an emergency. Bunched men, on sudden contact with enemy, become very prone to panic, and hysteria takes control.

PL. Comd. best position is in rear of fwd sec. Further back, it is impossible to have quick access to the frontiers of his fwd. scouts,

A controversial question still remains as to the ideal strength of sec. patrol ~~troop~~ to possibilities of casualties, encountered in jungle sec. patrols, tells against small parties penetrating any great distance from their base. In same regard, it is unwise to detail sections from PL to exploit far down tracks at junctions. Entrapment, thus general confusion, may result.

A small force is heavily put to, to extract or carry wounded. Tracks are fatal if near known enemy positions.

Patience & care will allow successful details excepting when impassable care is encountered.

### Support Weapons

Mortars & Amy, being a Japanese horror, many casualties can be saved by their frequent & immediate use. A position, on which primary contact reveals strength & determination to hold, and the taking of which need heavy fighting, upon application of support fire, is often evacuated. This is particularly so if nightfall is near.

The above tactics have the disadvantage of making in a tangled mass, much of the jungle, through which our subsequent approach to the enemy position, must come.

M.M.G's are invaluable for volume of fire, can be used in close proximity to enemy positions, and meet with anything but Jap approval.

## Signals

Communications generally were excellent, but at the cost of great fatigue by our boys. The 1000 yds runs of cable are far too unwieldy & heavy for French type of country. Assault wire is unsatisfactory, being easy to break, quick to entangle our troops & has short life. American metallic combat wire, light, durable, easy to reel in, has proved to be the ideal type.

## Landing Operations

Despite Naval Artillery support of a heavy calibre, a great amount of such fire appears to have either in the water, or being deep into the soft beach sand. Its effect upon the enemy is more ~~psychological~~<sup>psychological</sup> than material. Such psychological effect here at French must have been great, for material



damage was little, yet Japs withdrew from prepared positions, before contacted by our troops.

Our landing, at pre- dawn period appears the ideal timing for assault against waiting enemy. The Jap. habit of holding his fire until target is close & plainly seen, coupled with frontal & not infiltrate fire plan, allow vigorous troops at this landing time, to have a minimum of casualties upon open beaches.

### Enemy Weapons.

Are of impressively good manufactured quality, with good field performance. Excepting that the .5 M.M. G. is extremely heavy weapon for jungle warfare. With weight of 115 lbs it would be better substituted by mortars. The rifle grenade is a good weapon, light and accurate.

The 75 M.M. mountain gun & heavy mortar, although little encountered, <sup>told us</sup> sufficient to judge same as being ~~of an equivalent standard to our~~ ~~weapons~~. efficient support weapons, if correctly used.

### General

In jungle warfare, he who possesses the initiative - wins the fight. But initiative alone is insufficient. Initiative must have impetus. For without impetus, a campaign, although possessed of initiative, loses all possibilities.

Jungle warfare allows near equal conditions to prevail to within a few hundred yds. of the enemy. Contact can be broken off at any time, whenever conditions resumed, the jungle screening one's activities from the enemy. I see holes not the vital importance as in closest warfare.

16

together with supply problems  
These factors, <sup>^</sup> tend to slowen our  
activities to a less than tempo, &  
so the lossing of impetus, ~~but~~, &  
the prolongation of an action  
results.

In order to follow up any  
resultant advantage, attacks  
should be staged as early  
as possible. Nightfall forces  
an end to all activities, & so  
a temporary advantage lost if  
not exploited. The same principle  
applies to patrols.

Our troops are still ~~possessing~~  
from "jungle claustrophobia" - fear  
of the confines of the jungle.

We find that a true appreciation  
of jungle warfare can only be  
had by active participation.  
Any judgment we may have  
~~made~~ <sup>made</sup>, based only on our.

(1)  
When the 9th Div<sup>y</sup>, made the  
Amphibious landing at Lae it  
entered a new sphere of warfare - two  
that was jungle warfare.

The landings at Lae & then Dinschafen  
can be sorted into 2 categories. Unopposed  
& Opposed. I will deal mainly with  
the opposed landing. For this, I would  
say, that it is & has been proved a  
co-ordination of the 3 services  
Navy, Army & Air Force. The air force  
should have the first action. That is  
the bombing & strafing of beach defences.  
Then the navy should put down a  
heavy bombardment where in the  
later part the first wave of infantry  
should then land while the barrage creeps  
forward. My opinion of using L. B. I's  
for the second wave of attack, I do not  
think is suitable. First & second waves  
should consist of barges launched from  
A. P. I's. The reason I say this, is because  
the barges are small which <sup>means</sup> a small target,  
they are quicker & can "hit" the beach much  
quicker & troops can land more quickly.

& early, moving into the attack & supporting the first wave with a less degree of time & with a greater amount of efficiency.

Now come the phase of jungle warfare, the troops move forward & establish a firmer beachhead whilst supporting weapons are landed & ~~swung out~~ are quickly got into position. Patrols then ~~to~~ move & contact the enemy, thereby getting ~~the~~ information back to rear H. Q. of the whereabouts of the enemy positions are.

Patrols.

Jungle patrols are mainly for reconnoissance & for information. They if possible should not be seen or heard by the enemy, but remember that their job is mainly to observe. Where possible, tracks should not be used, but if the nature of the area is such that tracks have to be used, then they should do so. Methods. When advancing along tracks every man must be alert don't leave it to the forward scout

44

(3)

His job is to keep a sharp lookout certainly, but don't leave it to them or to depend on them entirely. One man who is not alert may endanger the whole advancing force.

The forward scout has a difficult & dangerous job. My opinion is that forward scouts should be a separate unit made up of volunteers, who become attached to the various companies when they are to go into action. He should be trained to the utmost in bushcraft, to read the signs, such as footprints, the overturning of a stick or leaf or freshly dug earth. We have the foreman who can train these men & they are the P. I. B. "boys" who are jungle born & jungle reared. I point this out because I think in jungle warfare the forward scouts are the eyes & ears of the army & his job is definitely the most important.

Tactics: Attacking a position.

When attacking a position, we have found how much our support weapons

(H)

play an important part. Artillery & mortars continually pounding a position must deteriorate it. Let me stray a moment to give you an example. The Jap is believer in secondary positions, especially from artillery & mortar fire, & he tends to panic & run for these positions, here is where the M. M. G. (& Brens) can play an important part by spraying the area of his positions whilst the artillery & mortars lay down a barrage. The 24th battalion have proven <sup>this</sup> quite effective also. The 2" mortar has also been proven effective whenever used or can be used.

That is why I say support weapons are most important the more they pound & machine-gun <sup>to the attacking troops</sup> them the less casualties will occur & highly trained & seasoned men are hard to replace.

Attack: This is the big problem. What number of men are needed to attack & how to attack. There have <sup>been</sup> certain forms of attack methods used, one is fire & movement. One party engages

(5)

while another party on his flank or front, wherever they are in position move forward, they who have moved forward then engage him, while the other force moves up, this goes on until they are in the position for the final attack.

The most effective method though has been to beat the Jap at his own game & that is to outflank his positions. This method has been most successful.

In closing I wish to add that this campaign has been successful only through the type of training that this Division had done, coupled with what we have recently learned in fighting in the area. We now have the initiative & will use it.



11/10/18

NY 77671  
PTA JOHNSON A.L.

D. COY.

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From No. MX 35988.

Name

Adzner

Unit

AD

B. Loh

Date

15-11-42

WHERE'S MY RATIONS?

This is a vague resume of what took place in our recent campaign. Without a day to day description I think you will get the general idea of what dealing with supplies means.

The supplies consist of rations, Ammunition, clothing, Expense Stores and Canteen goods, which of late have proved a problem. On many occasions these supplies have had as many as six channels to go through (also a few creeks) before reaching their destination. I know a good many cases this has been unavoidable because of the conditions of the roads and the position where the supplies have to be delivered. I often queried the fact when asked "where's my rations?" - The coming is the only answer, "Yeah" and



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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

2  
so is Christmas" comes the reply.  
During our stay at Langmack  
Bay I was assigned to get the  
crations the next day. At a quarter to  
six the driver of the jeep I self left  
to go to the D.I.D. which was about  
four miles away.  
On arriving there I had to  
fall in the que and wait my turn.  
(The other crews slept there.) And so  
by eight-thirty had a full load on  
the jeep and trailer, which was  
about half the Battalion's issue. All  
ready to race back to 'B' Coy'.  
Having travelled one third of the  
distance the jeep bogged in one of the  
innumerable creeks. Here we had to  
unload the contents, carry them to the  
top of the rise get the jeep out, then  
reload the jeep and trailer.  
We set sail once more and  
inside the mile got bogged again. So of



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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

come the rations and through the  
same procedure again.  
It was just on 10 o'clock when  
we arrived back at 'B' Co. had some  
one unload while we ate the overs.  
Then back we go again.  
On our return journey we only  
had one rise which caused us  
the same as on our first trip. It  
was 2 o'clock when eventually the lot  
of the rations were at 'B' Co. Here I  
apologised to Paddy the ration Sgt for  
having taken so long. He said I'd  
been in three bags. That's nothing said  
Paddy, I had four yesterday.  
The next job was to get  
them sorted into company amounts.  
Then carried for to points north - south - east  
& west. There they were taken by Company  
B's on a Q rep stationed forward. By  
this time the cook was going mad  
about something so en route to the

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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

④  
Kitchen I met a company Quartermaster who said. "Where's my ration?" Experience has told me that the customer is always right - so I told him. Quite indignant. He asked what are the others doing? I said "The same with ammunition and other supplies." So cap the evening of it was a general stand so that night - hence take up a snipers post and while it rained like hell I was thinking of what it will be like getting the rations tomorrow.

I dare say that was only one of the many days that have been the same for in the lines of supply. As time went by our honorable Joe decided to change things around, and in due course he took followed to the Sattelburg Road. But never let it be said that we did not get our share of the fighting. Our P.O.M. had a bomb land



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5

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within 1000 yards.  
Anyhow the difficulties still  
continued when we took up the  
following positions. It was decided to  
have a 'B' Ech. and a forward depot  
a point on the road for the company  
'B's' to congregate for collection & distribution  
of their supplies. (Woolworths chain stores  
in action)

Here the road soon decided not  
to let the pipe through so our  
assistance came the native carrying parties.  
Although they remind me of a cow  
upstairs they done their job.

Now I wish to make a  
few suggestions which are open for discussion  
disapproved of or approved of. It is  
my idea of overcoming the difficulties  
of supplies in this type of country.  
It is unnecessary to have a  
'B' Ech. from where the operations begin.  
Next a forward depot where the supplies



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(6)

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Unit .....

Date .....

can be put into company allotments.  
Stationed at this forward depot we  
have - Company Quartermasters - Ration Storeman  
and odds & sods. our command for B Ech  
personal plus the R.Q. This depot should  
be within 500 yards of the destination  
of all supplies.

Having the company go to take  
delivery of their goods they can  
distribute them into section lots at  
this point. Once having this forward  
depot organized the supplies reach their  
destination in less time and eliminates  
A Ech. The double handling at road point  
and fewer phone calls off shortages etc.  
The lesson learnt is that we  
must have a B Ech and a forward  
depot where the majority of R.Q. staff &  
attached should ~~operate~~ systematically  
answer the everlastingly question of

Where's My RATIONS.

P. H. G.

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From No. .... Name ..... Unit .....

Date .....

Undoubtedly there are more ways of  
simplifying I would enjoy a debate  
on different ideas and new ideas.  
This can be improved by addition of  
those who see improvements in my  
suggestion. It does not imply any inefficiency  
on the part of those concerned, but we  
had to learn. If by any chance  
you have anyone who thinks he cannot  
make a mistake - send him down  
to me.

That is all.

Yours truly  
A. D. B.

B. L. C.

P.S.

Convey my thanks to Mr. Briggs for  
the paper.



16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1943.

Lessons learned, in tactics and  
supply, during operations in  
New Guinea, as applicable to an  
Infantry Bn.

NX. 15071

S/Sgt. Andrews RPL.

The lessons whilst we have been in New Guinea have been many and varied so I propose to deal with the subject under three headings.

- (1) Tactics
- (2) Supply
- (3) General lessons.

Our lessons learned under "tactics heading" must be prefaced by the stories we heard of jungle warfare on our return from the M.E. and during our training in Aust.

all these stories inevitably started with "ah just back from the M.E. eh!" Oh well wait till you meet this super jap. you aint seen nothin yet." and then followed stories of how the jap fought to the last man, how cunning he was in concealment of weapon pits and fox holes, how he infiltrated, types of ambush which were many and varied, how active his patrols were and how he employed

snipers.

Our first lesson <sup>was</sup> learned at Lae when we saw how he quickly vacated prepared positions commanding a magnificent view of Yellow Beach and how he would retire under pressure.

In fact we learned that most of the stories re. the Japs were unfounded but of course that may be explained as one of Australia's leading generals explained <sup>it</sup> saying "The type of Jap soldier now being encountered is much inferior to his early troops."

Our second lesson was that his beach positions and pill boxes could easily be dispatched by outflanking them and coming in from the rear as none of his pill boxes have all round defence and that he depends on snipers set back from his positions to cover the rear.

Our third lesson was that attack still pays dividends and that it is better to incur losses by going forward and accomplishing the job ahead. It is now

a known fact that troops who go to ground when a machine gun opens up, and who do not quickly plan a method of attack to wipe out that gun lose just as many men lying on the ground as do the troops who move in and do the job. One must remember that troops who hit the ground, and stay there, are just as effective in their original positions before they moved. ? Instance

Fourth lesson learned is that ground captured from the enemy must always be held by at least a third of the force used to capture <sup>it</sup>, as we know of cases where a position has been occupied by a boy and they, not thinking of enemy in the neighbour hood, have ~~returned~~ <sup>moved back</sup> to their F.O.P. for gas left out of battle have returned only to find the gap had returned in their absence.

Fifth. It is essential that bayonets and all troops should know the value of their sub. light weapons. Why waste time getting arty to do a job when the 3" mortar is being just the opposite

carried by the bay? 17.

Sixth. Smoke from 2" and 3" Mortars is invaluable in this country to blanket the enemy positions whilst our troops have to cross open country. Its use should be encouraged for the effect of advancing troops coming through smoke to close with the enemy is terrific. The use of smoke and M.F. put the gap jumpy.

Seventh. An ideal weapon for use against the gap would be a thermite filled 3" mor. bomb which would force him out of his positions.

Eighth. Supply line must be adequately guarded to prevent the gap from cutting the supply line or if sufficient troops are not available mobile groups should be stationed at points along the supply line to quickly clear the enemy out.

Ninth. Patrols must be of at least Pl strength and such patrols who do contact the enemy must move into attack almost immediately if the Pl

could think he can make such an attack pay. In any event delay is disastrous for one movement the gap is capable of doing is that of out flanking.

Fifth. Do not underestimate the gap but remember that he can be beaten by our superior troops just as easily as any other enemy.

Under supply comes such problems as food, water and ammunition. An army marches on its stomach just as much in this country as it did in Napoleons time.

First. Echelons should move as close to B as ~~is~~ possible for the supply route from rear echelon should be as short as possible.

Second. A ration M.C.O and two men should operate from supply point and should use all available jups to carry food and ammo to jup head where it should be carried forward, by echelon personnel, in Bulk to a B splitting up area and the boy rations sorted out

in that area. The present system of splitting rations into bag lots and then carried forward to Bw area is unsatisfactory unless under strict supervision. This system should only be used where it is possible to get bag supplies direct to bag area.

Fourth. The present used containers are too large for easy handling by troops on the move. Suggestions are

Tea in four ounce waterproof canteens to avoid spoilage.

Sugar in 16 oz containers for easy handling.

Jam in four ounce tins to avoid wastage.

Bully beef to be packed in four ounce tins instead of tin measure.

The waste of food using the present containers is terrific for troops eating only one meal on the move can't always eat in large groups if in enemy country.

Fifth  
Sixth. All ammo should be packed

in one man loads as present packing is too heavy to allow of easy transportation by carriers.

Sixth. An adequate supply of two gallon containers should be held in rear echelon for use by forward bays when such bays are not within easy reach of water.

Seventh. More liberal issue of canned heat as present issue is not sufficient.

Eighth. Present system of cooking has been proved obsolete and a section kitchen should be an issue to be sent forward to bays whenever operations become sufficiently static to permit cooking operations.

Ninth. In coastal operations L.C.V.P. should be manned by Australians for purpose of reaching closest point to forward bays.

Tenth. It pays dividends to cut gup tracks whenever possible for supply.

General.



General.

To avoid wastage of materials a jungle kit should be issued to each man of two oil silk sheets each to measure 8 feet by four for the purpose of erecting waterproof shelter. Present 4d sheet should be discarded as being too heavy in relation to its utility purpose.

Individual mosquito net to cover head and shoulders only instead of present bulky and heavy net.

There should be an individual issue of flat waterproof atabrin container with at least thirty days supply of atabrin on the man at all times.

In my opinion the present Bren gun should be unadvised and a much lighter gun substituted.

After learning and carrying out the above ideas both tactically and in supplies this Bn would move forward much easier and with more results than they have.

A Bn's and every soldier should

move forward killing gaps where ever  
found and they should do it as easily  
and as comfortably as is humanly  
possible.

R. B. Anderson

(Essays)

## Finschhaven

### Dedicated

To the men who died,  
their efforts - their sacrifices  
made possible our success.

### Remember -

"They shall not grow old, as we that are  
left growe old,

Age shall not weary, nor the years condemn,

at the going down of the sun, and in the morning  
we will remember them.

16<sup>th</sup> Sept 43, dawned cloudy and uncertain, we were not interested  
in the weather, all were filled with a feeling of tense  
expectancy - the morning dragged on - midday the news broke,  
LAE had fallen.

Weary troops who had not rested since the morning of  
the memorable 4<sup>th</sup>, the beginning of the fifth year of war,  
and the beginning of jungle warfare for men who for so  
long had known no other than the arid windswept desert,  
with its miles of front - rumbling tanks manoeuvring in battle,  
heavy artillery barrages, acres of minefields - tangles of donnett  
vine - all enveloped in swirling columns of dust - there was  
begin with the night - here in New Guinea it ceased when  
the sun went down - this was something new, here men  
fought man against man - individualism was asked for  
and expected.

LAE was ours, the battle was over - speculation rife - what  
would happen now? would we rest or would we carry the  
fight to a hard pressed enemy - the smoke of rumour began to  
circulate - conjecture was at its best, the 20 Bde would attack  
and capture FINSCHHAVEN, we did not have long for thought,  
presumption turned to fact, higher authority decreed that we  
should strike immediately, strike before a beaten dis-organised  
enemy could gather his weary remnants and mould them one

into a formidable fighting force.

Hurried was our preparation, on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> - only five short days after the taking of LAE, we stood, fully equipped waiting on the beach - it was late evening - the close of a tropical night was fast falling, soon it would be dark - the American troop transports destined to convey us on our mission were coming in, away in the distance silently riding the calm waters - the silhouettes of our escorts could be seen - waiting!

"Eightish" embarkation began, shortly after nine we were all aboard - The LCIs heavily laden, groaned and heaved then slid away - their blunt noses swinging around to the open sea - we were on our way. "It's on again", the old platitude common among seasoned campaigners on the eve of impending battle was frequently heard. I was one of those who leaned on the deck railing and watched the receding shore, the dark fringe of the tree tops fading from view. It was peaceful and serene.

The convoy strung out in line - led and flanked by ships of war, a scene long to be remembered, barely three weeks before we had participated in another such scene - a longer one, in conjunction with the remainder of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division and support units we had carried out the first Australian amphibious operation of the present war - This was to be the 2d Bde second such "show"; our spirits were high - we who had never known the bitterness of defeat, knew in our hearts we never would - leadership second to none was ours, behind us the experience of LAE - Tradition - our fathers at GALLOPOLI, we could not fail.

The night wore on uneventfully - sleep did not come early, the dawn and action were too close, some slumbered oblivious of the morrow - others were noticeably restless.

Three thirty a.m. - The quietness of the night was broken by the ship's bell - this was reveille and the beginning of "our"

day. Those who were not already up and about, quickly scrambled out and went on deck to enjoy the early freshness of the moon. Half an hour later we were called below. Breakfast of "bully" and biscuits followed - half a pint of tea - foulities on board were not the best for feeding - it was scratch as scratch can - no body cored or grumbled - the fare was eaten in silence - these men understood.

Some men stood alone with their thoughts - others in groups of two or three, talking lowly - most made a last check of gear, listed their weapons - then settled down to await the signal to prepare - this the hardest period of all, those last minutes of waiting! Soon the barrage would open now.

A little before five we heard the first bark of the guns, for a eleven long minutes we listened - it seemed an eternity, crept below waiting! We could hear the muffled reports of shells bursting on shore - the roar of our planes strafing the beach.

The APDs would by now have loaded our assault troops into barges - soon there would be on their way.

Thoughts - raced through our minds, and still we waited!

Suddenly as the barrage opened, as suddenly it ceased. We knew our wait was nearly over - in six minutes our first elements would be ashore. The quick "rat cat cat" of machine guns broke the morning air - instinctively we knew it was an opposed landing! Thank God! at last we knew something definite of what was going on! Sweet glances passed between mates, emotion swelled many a breast, one or two spoke slowly and low they said "It's on again!"

The order! Get ready to land, come sharp and clear - we were ready! Up the gangway we struggled, knelt behind the landing ramp - so solemn, so quietly we might have been at prayer, enemy fire was heavy, over all, hung an odor of burnt powder. Small arms fire beat into the bow and sides of the craft - causing a whining

unnerving noise as it rocketed. In the half light  
traces ~~traces~~ lit their path across the sky.

Due praise must here be paid to our gallant Allies, the  
American boat gunners, it was they who blazed  
retaliation - the pressure on the triggers seemed never to relax,  
these "Yankee" lads effectively covered our landing, we  
owe them a debt of gratitude, minus their courageous  
part, our losses would indeed have been heavy.

Our automatics firing, grenades bursting, brought  
us back to realization, this was sweet music to our  
ears, we knew our Jwd elements had gained the shore!  
The feeling of relief <sup>was</sup> undescrivable.

We were racing in, assault barges on their  
way out - passed - almost unnoticed. It was lighter now,  
dimly we could see at the water's edge motionless forms,  
thoughts were varied, was our advance pinned on the  
tide line, we had little time to think - the craft hit  
the beach - jolted back, the ramp went clattering  
down, we roved ashore and as we passed we knew  
those still bodies would move no more! "Their's Was  
Supreme Sacrifice"

We went to ground, twenty yards ahead the first  
wave were down - the enemy held in strength the edge  
of the timber. Rapidly those in authority grasped the  
significance of the situation, we had landed far  
to the south. Units - sub units, split - out of order,  
infantry, medical, odds and sods intermingled - men  
shouting "what Coy, what Bn", endeavouring to sort  
themselves out - this was the sequel to hard training  
discipline - unksome at times in camp, now proving  
the full extent of its worth.

Then! The Order! "Go in and establish a  
beach head lads," Not head - but clear it came - the enemy  
fire was still intense - one moment, hesitancy prevailed

then in from the sea a zero swept, a "yell" went up, the mob went in. We learned later that Bde Headquarters went in fighting too!

The advance rushed on - attacking and taking, no foe could hold them now - stretchers heavers dropping behind to bind the wounded - the broken body of an enemy soldier lay at the foot of a tall tree, above a snipers platform - more evidence of a naval gunners accuracy.

A prisoner was taken, he yielded much valuable information regards opposition strength, dispositions - meagre detail of tactical plan. From him we learned of the "Mikado's" "Fanatical Imperial Marines" - Blue Ribboned troops of Japan - little we cared - We who had tamed and disillusioned the "Wolves of Turcoman" We who at ALAMEIN had smashed the arrogant Naps of Rommel's Afrika Korps. Before us, new blood for the 20<sup>th</sup> Bde.

Soon we had reached the coast track running south-west to the native village of KATIKA - here we paused, sorted out - the 2/17 to the right flank by the SONG River - the 2/15 to ensure the immediate security of the beach head. 2/13 to exploit west up SIKI CK, and south along coast track to HELDSBACH then South-West to ZAG area. The left flank coy of the Bde landing group had not yet been located - The Unit Commander was confronted with the task of organising a programme for three coys instead of four, this was immediately done and the push continued without undue delay. By midday our troops had been heavily engaged on the SIKI CK - we suffered 27 casualties - HELDSBACH plantation was in our hands, communication had been established with the missing coy - they were in occupation of the Fauch petty area. Among the coconuts we rested, awaiting orders - here we experienced a "doing over" by our own airforce - Mitchells flew slowly back and forth with



aggravating regularity - stripping the area, we wondered if ever they would go away, eventually they did.

Orders come, we moved on - late that afternoon we heard a welcome "boom", the 25 Pounds were in form and registering out to the West, somebody said "a place called SATENBURG was the target."

Night fell - finishing a crowded day, one of the fullest days we had ever known - there was time for reflection - 21 days bulk supply had <sup>come</sup> with us, vast quantities of ammunition - the smooth working efficiency of the Q staff showed out - within a few hours it was off the beach and under cover of the trees.

The action was going well, our spirits were high - Roughly our line ran from the SONG River southwest of KATIKA as far as ZAG, thence South East to LAUNCH JETTY, although not continuous we had covered the main tracks - we slept that night between pocket sheets with a deep feeling of self-satisfaction.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> dawned fine, light rain had fallen during the night, long before first light the troops were astir, an early breakfast and preparation for a move followed, our success of yesterday must be exploited, 17<sup>th</sup> Bn would extend their left flank to ZAG relieving the 13<sup>th</sup> of that responsibility. This morning we witnessed the effect of good staff work, on the day previous bull dozers had followed our advance south clearing the track - now a convoy of jeeps carrying supplies went through. The day promised to be quiet, a patrol penetrated to the air strip found it unoccupied, returned. Midday the 13<sup>th</sup> were assembled by the jetty. The 15<sup>th</sup> passed through - shortly after the 13<sup>th</sup> followed the trail of its sister Bn - pushing south, the battle for FINSCHHAVEN was about to begin. On the way down it was obvious the jeep did not intend to fight

on the flat coastal country - we wondered how far back he had gone. That night we bivouaced 3000 yds to the north of the Bumi - here we heard the news - the 15<sup>th</sup> had reached the river, the coast track was under observation and was being heavily mortared - it was evident the enemy were making their stand on the high ground along the south bank - recon parties had suffered casualties - machine guns were inflicting the stream. The night was uneventful, we moved at dawn left the main track and followed a pad south west over the high country - this was our first hard difficult climb. From the top for the first time we looked down on FINSCHHAVEN - we pushed on, stops were frequent while the lead coy fell its way, at long last we reached the flat river country and waited. Two companies retraced their steps over that tortuous path - returning with the Bus nations - later 17<sup>th</sup> troops came through with supplies for the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Here we learned a coy of the 15<sup>th</sup> had forced its way over the Bumi, under heavy machine gun fire - their losses had not been light, waist deep water, steep slippery banks, increased ten fold the difficulty of crossing. we now had a bridge head - all ranks admired their achievement, this accomplishment would go down in official records as an outstanding feat of the campaign.

Elements of the 13<sup>th</sup> crossed later without loss and went up the south-west slopes digging <sup>in</sup> astride the TRIMORO track. The bridge head was far from safe - it had been dearly won, early next morning the 15<sup>th</sup> coy struck east inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and gaining a high position overlooking the river - this relieved the position considerably.

Three coys of the 13<sup>th</sup> then moved south east occupying the high kunai country 800 yards north west of KAKAKOC. The fourth coy working as an independent force fought

its way out and occupied the junction of the KAKAKOC  
TIRIMORO tracks - thus cutting the enemies' <sup>main</sup> line of retreat.  
The 15<sup>th</sup> Bn were now situated in the west-north corner  
of the SALANKAUA plantation - the enemy was strongly  
entrenched east along the river and to the south in depth.

The two Bns were now holding ground of immense  
tactical importance - territory that had been hard  
won - the price paid in life, blood, and sweat. Sick men  
heavy with fever stayed on, courageously playing their  
part, others tired, haggard, unshaven - eyes swollen for  
want of rest were there - super human effort won the  
day. If ever there existed men, who did not know  
the meaning of "defeat", it was these men. Throughout  
the campaign, fires had not been allowed, the canned  
heat issue inadequate - tea was priceless. But still they  
carried on.

Here the commanders were faced with a grave problem,  
one they had not known previously - the difficulty of supply, to  
overcome this three stages was established, Beach in the vicinity  
of the bulk dump, Beach a thousand yards north of the Bsmi,  
and supply pits to the west on the river and 600 yds in rear of  
the fighting troops. The coast track was still subject to heavy  
fire - jeeps were not allowed passed Beach - food and ammunition  
had to be man hauled from here, knowing the sufferings and  
difficulties of the ywd troops - the 13<sup>th</sup> Coy Fd. Engineers volunteered to  
carry - they rendered yeoman service, without their assistance  
and cooperation our final assault would have been delayed  
much longer.

Rapid had been our advance - troops left to guard  
the rear were insufficient, our supplies vulnerable to  
infiltration, conveying parties moved in fighting formation  
ready for any eventuality. During this period of waiting, our patrols  
were active - frequent clashes occurred - we both suffered and  
inflicted casualties - stretchers bearers were busy - heavy rain fell

tracks narrow muddy and greasy, special mention must be given to the men who coned wounded down the TIRIMORO track - only those who participated could realize the hazards of that path, winding down grades as steep as 30°. It took ten to fourteen men to juggle a stretcher down that trail.

Events moved slowly these trying days of uncertainty, slowly sufficient supplies were being accumulated at the top. The Brigadier came after, war correspondents were numerous, news was scarce - we heard the 17<sup>th</sup> had repulsed several light counter-attacks, the enemy was feeling from the north. Own arty support and mortars continued to harass the Jap at intermittent periods, Vickers well to the fore pumped a few belts out, the heavy guns were now part of a rifle coys attacking force, the crews "bullocked" them forward to within yards of the enemies defences.

"Father Time" was ageing, another army came down to the Bumi, its weapons a coffee urn, its captain a good Samaritan, proudly he hoisted his units flag, its emblem a Kangaroo, he came not to reproach us for past sins, or preach of the men we might have been. His ideal, practical christianity - he succoured the wounded and sick, revived the tired and weary. This was a happy little halfway tavern for those that passed.

The 29<sup>th</sup> of Sept - after a wet night the day was clear, the last of the ammunition came up, we were ready, tomorrow the offensive would be resumed, plans were discussed, final orders given. 2/45 Bn had arrived and relieved the 17<sup>th</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> Bde were drawing up from the south, this was heartening news indeed, sorely needed assistance was on the way.

Eight AM. the last day of the month, Vults Kengeone bombers swept low over SAHANKAUA plantation, skimming the palm tops strafing and bombing. We stood on the hill, in awe, fascinated as we watched them come and go.

we did not envy the enemy. The air strike ended! The unit struck! a two pronged drive, our objective upper and lower KAKAKOC - the going was heavy, the terrain treacherous, contact extremely difficult to maintain, platoons were separated, the battle commenced! a struggle bitter and bloody! the fight continued, forward elements charged, deeply entrenched positions in the KLEPBE ck - fierce hand to hand fighting ensued - the gap was liquidated, our casualties in the vicinity of seventy - stretcher bearers were at a premium - we could not spare the men - the 15th sent a platoon for the job.

A "bloody" day, deeds of gallantry many, nightfall found the remnants of two 13th coys, occupying the low ground 200 yds north west of KAKAKOC - their position precarious - above them a veritable fortress, the danger of encirclement more than a possibility - combined their total strength less than eighty - they had come so far, whatever the cost now they would hold their gain.

The night dragged mercilessly, with the new month came sunrise, today the climax - we either succeeded or failed. Cautiously a plan went into operation - the reserve coy passed the forward elements, commenced a "way-back" movement on the village - intending to attack from the East - a daring endeavour! Simultaneously the 17th passed through the 15th sweeping south. Expectantly we waited, any minute the final battle would begin now. But vain was our wait - it never came. This ~~was~~ the end! a bloodless victory "Imperial Marines" and the spirit of SAMURAI had taken advantage of the night and fled.

Came evening, we went down to FINSCHHAVEN by the sea, here lay peace - and primitive civilization, nature fastavenued by tubereous in bloom, stately palms almost regal in their look - flowering frangipanni, island fruit in abundance - this an artists' tropical splendour - a romancers' paradise - the soldiers' reward of victory. All were happy - we had done our job, once more the 22nd had got through.

Wentell M. 20.11.43

Pvt J DICKINSON A Coy

There was no interest in the convoys steaming up the Bay, for convoys came & went into Milne Bay every day.

This day the ships carried a battalion of men who had made history during these past three years of war. The "devils own" had shown the Jerry & Italian in the past & were now ready for the Jap.

Soon it was common news ashore that the 9th Div were in New Guinea. The air began to buzz with rumours for it was known, that these hard hitting warriors were up north to deal a few blows at the Jap.

The battalion disembarked in typical jungle weather, Rain, mud, & more rain. They were soon busy erecting a camp, & after a few days hard toil everything was made comfortable as possible.

A week soon past, then training began in earnest, these men had to learn how to use new weapons in preparation for a big amphibious show. There were craft specially built for the job. These L.C.I's (Landing craft infantry) which were manned by Americans were a new experience, & after a few lessons & instructions the troops soon became adapted to the routine of landing. Soon training was completed and all were anxiously awaiting their opportunity to have a slap at these Slant eyed Sons of Nippon.

The known tactics of the Jap were taught to the men & effective counters were introduced. The type of country likely to be encountered was studied, then on the 25<sup>th</sup> Aug. the usual "Furphies" were spread. Soon! the big show would be on.

A sand table was drawn up of the area in which the division was to land, from aerial photographs obtained

it was possible to show all ranks alike the country they would encounter & capture

Toward the end of August, a new type of weapon was introduced an A.P.D., which is a converted destroyer from which the main assault troops are lowered into small craft known as L.C.V.P. (Vehicle Personal.) to make the initial landing.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> Aug training was completed, all were accustomed to the hardships liable to be encountered. All was ready. The battalion commander called his men together to give them the "guts"

He explained, how the battalion was to be detached from the 20<sup>th</sup> Bde to make an auxiliary beach head to be known as Yellow Beach away from the main landing of the division, for which the 20<sup>th</sup> Bde, were to be the spear head. The main beach was to be known as Red Beach



(4)

The battalions were to have artillery support a half hour after the beach head was formed & the job was to hold the eastern flank, to stop any counter attacks from that direction, & also stop any reinforcements reaching the troops who would be cut off.

In conclusion he added that his battalion in the eyes of other leaders had been given the "Plum". His final words being "Best of luck to you all."

The word "Plum" had everyone guessing. What exactly did he mean? For days there was much discussion about the possibilities of the "Plum".

Finally on the 2nd Sept, all preparations were completed, Milne Bay was clustered with ships from the early hours of the morning the area had been a hive of activity

An Invasion armada was there. Ashore the troops lined the shore ready to board the three respective crafts. The artillery was already on board, & now finally the assault troops the "infantry" were embarking.

The armada sailed at 1400 hrs first in an ~~east~~ easterly direction, then north. On board all was well, voices had an excited pitch, every one was glad to be under way. Soon! All would know all about this Plum.

At dawn on the 3rd Sept the convoy was still steaming northward. The Anniversary of Britains entry into the war, today was the first day of the fifth year of war. A fitting day for such an enterprise to be under way. No wonder the King had set aside this day as one of prayer, as so many gallant men sailed toward enemy held territory.

Buna was sighted, at ten o'clock the troops disembarked, here all had a clean up a couple of good feeds & a rest. Old friends met & with a hand shake wished on another, all the best in coming battles. It was heard quite often 'I wonder what this plum is.

Still no one except those in control, knew where the invasion was to take place. Although there had been much speculation by all, soon! all would know. The security was marvelous

At 1400 hrs the troops embarked once again & the Invasion was on its final journey. Seals were broken on closely guarded orders, secret information was being handed on to the junior officers, who in turn were to promulgate this orders to their men.

At 1700 hrs platoon commanders passed their instructions to the

men. They land at 0600 hrs the following morning, they were landing 15 miles east of Lae, there was no enemy known to be in the area. Reville was to be 5 o'clock, to be signalled by 3 bells on the ship's buzzer, 2 rings was to be half hour to go, one ring was  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour to go. There was a likelihood of attack from air or surface craft. Their job was to wipe out enemy & capture the ground on the Sneeze River, while the rest of the division took Lae.

As night fell the first enemy territory was sighted, the craft had now to pass through dangerous waters, this was where possible submarine or air attacks would take place, nerves were tensed, and a restless night was had by all.

The night dragged, then— three bells, 1 hour to go, an hour before the landing would take place all hurried

two buses, by this all had had a snack, packed their equipment & were on deck, awaiting the dawn.

A fiery ball ascended in the east, dawn was heralded by a reddish glow, land was in sight a lone plane was to be seen on the distant horizon. The ships were now with range of shore batteries, the convoy parted into two groups, soon the show would be on, men were on deck hoping to see the destroyers go into action, but orders came for all to go below & get ready.

The destroyers were now steaming into position to shoot at selected targets, at 0545 hrs they opened up with an ear splitting salvo again & again they blasted. The A.P. D's now in close to the shore were lowering their LCVP's which were soon speeding toward the shore

The destroyers ceased fire as the first wave hit the beach, soon ploughing their way through the undergrowth, in came the LCIs the second wave were close on the trail of the first, soon a swamp was encountered & the men were up to their waists in soupy water. With taught nerves they pushed forward so yet not one Jap had been sighted.

One chap who was in action for the first time asked an old soldier beside him, what the strange smell was, 'Just cordite from shells' was the answer, 'You'll ~~be~~ get used to that before long. Although nerves were edged, there was still a casual feeling among the men a feeling of utter confidence, and defiance of any enemy. Suddenly there was a Ack Ack bursting overhead, as enemy

came in to bomb, but they were soon subdued, some although dropped their bombs, still the landing was a success, the position was being consolidated. A beach head formed, the infantry were busy digging. The development had possession of new territory, and now the arty was being landed.

An hour passed swiftly by & no counter attack. The Air Force had struck at position thought to be held by enemy, a cordon of our fighters swept from land to the sea, to warn of any enemy planes who may attempt to attack.

The first boom of a 25 pounder pierced the air as the arty went into action. Shooting on selected target, which were to be objectives of this bold 13<sup>th</sup> before sundown. The whizzing of shells gave all a feeling of confidence

a reassurance that the support was in position.

Scouts were soon out & all boys were pushing toward their first objective. A triumph in organization, perfect co-ordination between Navy, Army, & Air Force. The enemy was outwitted more tunnels to those already carried by the ninth.

So probing further into enemy territory, No man's land was this but soon the country would be controlled by the allies, more supplies & troops began to pour in the beach head. All was quiet.

The "Plum" was now beginning to show out, the men felt full of confidence now as they pushed forward. ~~By night~~

For the first time in this type of war fire a new weapon was introduced. An Aerial Observer



ation plane, Boomerang planes, built in Australia, & manned by Australian pilots specially trained to give directions & ranges to guns crews, they swept over wide areas in front of the advancing battalion & brought shells to bear on their objectives, this was an asset, in as much that the attacking troops had not to be forward at the time the barrage was being brought down, so that observation of results could be taken from the air they had a better chance of spotting enemy. This helped the men considerably, as they felt that it would be almost impossible for the enemy to put on any surprise attacks, when these planes were circling overhead.

Mid day was soon with them & no enemy were encountered the troops began to relax.

By night fall all objectives were taken, men began to relax with a feeling of security. Then the report came through that C. Coy had struck the Jap. So enemy were in the area, nerves were once again tensed, soon the sun faded away & darkness grew blacker as clouds gathered over head. It was impossible to see ones hand in front of their faces. There were all types of noises, the jungle certainly comes to life at night. Mens voices came in whispers, each & everyone were expecting the worst & hoping for the best. A bird flew past, its wings making a wind noise. This jungle certainly has some queer sounds, leaves began to fall from trees, nerves ten were on edge, the tension was on all night, then came the fiery dawn & preparation made for new advances.

The natives who had fled to the "Malga" when the landing was on, now had learnt that their

white masters were back & soon they began to appear along tracks in groups, all smiling as if they were once again happy to see their "White Master". Soon there was about a hundred of them & they were ~~put~~ put to wash, which they did with a smile as if they were happy.

The battalion was now pushing along the coast, the Jap was nowhere to be seen, those contacted by C. Coy. the day previous had fled, & now the forward boys were making a rapid advance. News came from the main landing that all was going to plan & by the end of the second day the division had taken all objectives & was steadily advancing on Lae.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> Sept ~~of~~ the battalion was advancing so swiftly that "A" Coy who had pulled back to the "Yellow Beach" were so far behind the forward boys that they had to

be taken along the coast by barge, here they pushed ~~it~~ through the forward bays towards the Sneeze River, men began to realise that the lighter they traveled the better, so all along the track loads began to get smaller. The only thing the troops were keen to carry, extra, was food, for they found with the heavy work & physical strain, that the hunger was great & they all ate hearty meals. Trucks seem to run every where so there was plenty of fresh water. Always sweating, it was grand to get plenty of water to quench big thirsts.

By mid-day they were on the banks of the Sneeze, here was at least ~~at~~ five hundred yards of open country, this was where the Jap would probably make a stand.

All were expecting that here they would meet the Jap for the first time, the river was flowing fast & would be

16.

difficult to cross, so after a recess by the company commander they decided to push on to the high ground which was about 2000 yds on the other side.

So onward, the river was an ordeal, few lost their balance & were swept down stream by the fast current but all reached the far bank safely. All across scouts were forward looking for a track to this high ground which they had now learned was a mission, known as Hapoi. The scouts found a track & here they were met by a German missionary who gave them assurance that the Japs had flown & he was willing to lead the way to the mission.

Upward ever upward now every one began to realize what the Kokoda trail must have been like so they tramped up this never ending trail, then however it must of seemed,

17/18

as they reached the summit. What a marvelous position for an observation post the whole of Lae was visible to the naked eye. It was possible to observe miles out to sea. The Jap certainly was not a tactical soldier not to command such a marvelous high feature.

At the end of the day the battalion was in position from Hopoi to the coast. Once again the "Devils Own" had completed their job & now had positions from which they could stop any attempt by the enemy to reinforce their doomed troops in Lae. The moon showed its face for the first time that night, but about midnight the sky became shrouded by dark clouds. Then! the rains came & it just poured down & everyone had a miserable night, next morning the men were like old shags standing round in groups cold & wet.

18. 18

Out came the sun and soon the lads were drying out their clothes & strengthening their positions, for it was not yet known, if there were any enemy in the district & if they would counter attack. The day passed without any enemy being sighted.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> Sept it was decided to explore the area in front of Kopoi, & to find tracks to a mission near the coast. The patrol left early & soon found a well beaten track which they decided to follow. Here was a surprise for all, the Japs had been here in force & from appearances had made a hurried departure leaving everything behind them. Strange for these were supposed to be an enemy who had to be belted out of their positions, maybe they had changed their tactics this time & decided they were facing defeat.

In true Australian style the scavenging was on in earnest & the lads had fountain pens, watches, & coins, all these must of been overlooked by the fleeing Nippo who left behind not only his personal gear but his weapons a few heavy & light machine & 37 m.m. guns were left in their positions, maybe the suddenness of the attack & the pounding by the navy had put the fear of the devil into these slant eyed son of Nippon. One thing was certain now that there had been enemy in the area.

Days past & patrolling reported no enemy to be seen. The rest of the division was quickly closing in on the Jap bombers were making feeble attempts to bomb the troops but his Air Force seemed to lack the usual spirit



and twice unloaded their bombs into the sea.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> Sept it was decided to redouble the "Devils own" to allow them to be in the final attack on Lac, a battalion of the A.M.F. came up to release these men for the final plunge. The forward elements of the division were some 15 miles away & now the great chase was on. The Tramping, hour after hour this was a great physical strain, but once again the men faced their task with a smile, and plodded on, two days solid marching & the "Devils own" men behind the forward elements who were making a bold bid to take Lac, they had & made a successful crossing of the Buse river which had been in flood & the waters were flowing at ~~terrific~~ neck breaking speed. The battalion was

to cross in cover of darkness on craft. Once again the barges were proving themselves invaluable, shells were bursting near by. The Japs must be close at hand, the men all eager now, were ready to meet this barbaric enemy. Night fell & the battalion crossed without a hitch and at dawn was up behind the forward troops, soon now they would get a slap at the Japs.

Wounded were coming back so the fighting was just ahead. Maybe tomorrow these anxious troops would get a slap at these Japs, all was going well the Japs was fighting in desperate rear guard action, & the 9th div was attacking fiercely as the day ended the rumour was about that the "devil's own" were going in on the day following.

as night fell all were anxious to know how things were going and if they would be in the final push into Lae.

The next day the men were told to dump all their heavy gear & get ready to attack, at last their turn had come to advance on the enemy, at 1 p.m. the artillery opened up a barrage, it was on! The final thrust! Everything was on the move, soon they would get at the japs, but as the battalion marched along, the track leading to the air strip the news came to them that Lae had fallen the japs had fled to the hills he had escaped under the cover of darkness. Victory was theirs, the 9th Div had done to the japs what they had done to Jerry. They had proved they were

equally at home in the mud  
& slush of the jungle as they were  
in the vast open arid desert.

The world is a funny  
place & the defeat of the Jap had  
different effects on these hard hitting  
warriors, some were glad to hear the  
show was over, but the majority  
felt a great disappointment for these  
Japs had escaped death here, to fight  
elsewhere. These were the men who  
had to charge the Jap positions with  
rifle & Bayonet, some they knew would  
pay the supreme sacrifice, but the  
words of their battalion commander was still  
fresh in their ears, they wished to put  
his words in action, "To Kill Kill &  
Kill". Never before have men been  
so bitter toward an enemy these  
yellow bastards, had threatened their  
homes that sunny isle they all  
loved, could they show any mercy

to an animal such as was this uneducated coolie, to annihilate the whole Japanese Empire was their aim & they would certainly leave no stone unturned until that had their homes safe from possible invasion.

The days that followed were usual of jungle life, marching all day & camping in a position near a creek for the night, until on the third day the battalion made its way to ward the sea, encamped along the beach <sup>for</sup> a few days well earned rest was had by all.

Rumours once again began to fill the air with excitement, the 20th Brigade had been given the job of taking Finchhafen, they were to land on a beach some 11 miles from the town.

Things began to move

at last the battalion was again  
 on the move, so at 3 p.m. on the  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept the men were assembled  
 awaiting the final march to the  
 embarking point. Out at sea  
 as far as the eye could see were  
 craft of all shapes & sizes. At  
 5 p.m. as they were marching along  
 the beach to where the barges were  
 to come in Anti Aircraft shells began  
 to pierce the air with their screams  
 & bursting shrapnel, above were enemy  
 planes coming in on a bombing attack.  
 The men moved from the open beach to  
 the cover of the jungle as one man,  
 the bombers unloaded their bombs at  
 a group of destroyers & craft but  
 none were hit, the old luck was good  
 everyone was on edge now surely  
 the enemy sighting an invasion  
 armada such as this would plaster  
 this place with bombs, so the daylight

hours were anxious ones, all were glad when darkness enveloped the sky, at 2000 hrs the craft were due in & the troops were all ready to embark, but something unforeseen had happened, the craft was missing, like the days of the theatre "The show must go on" so the company was split into two groups & embarked.

The night had a sinister air, something seemed to be wrong, what with the afternoon excitement all were on edge, the landing was to take place at 0530 hours the next morning, not many slept that night as the ships were over loaded & men were all over the decks.

The buses had gone for the quarter of an hour to go. The destroyers had sent their first salvo of shells into the beach.

men yet another. The small craft were  
 lowered & speeding toward the shore  
 machine guns were rattling. Tracers  
 were filling everywhere, was there  
 enemy ashore, had he learnt of  
 the landing & rushed troops into  
 position, so he could prevent them  
 making a beach head & disorganise  
 the plans & possible taking of Finch  
 haven. The second wave was on its  
 way in, there were enemy dug in, in  
 the scrub covering the beach. The  
 cry for stretchers became loud. The  
 air ~~the~~ an enemy bullet had  
 found a mark, but with a tradition  
 behind them & a enemy in front of them  
 in to the jungle went the "clever's own"  
 the enemy turned to their heels &  
 fled; but not many escaped alive.  
 These men wanted blood in payment  
 for their wrath & could only see  
 one way to rid the earth of these



Termite & that was to exterminate  
 them. At the break of day the  
 beach head was formed a cordon  
 of fighters were ~~of~~ circling over  
 head the artillery were in position  
 & had opened up on selected  
 targets, another victory. Although  
 the enemy had been in position with  
 pill boxes & trench systems he had  
 never bargained with the strong  
 heart of these attacking Australians  
 who proved to be too good for  
 the best troops Japan could  
 produce his Imperial Marines. By  
 midday the battalion was pushing  
 on toward Fenchaven with rapid  
 speed.

Logo had better beware  
 for his fate is a horrible one  
 he will soon be accompanying  
 his co-murderer - Muro.

The Japanese had dealt some callous blows to the British Empire with their surprise attack on Singapore, the 8<sup>th</sup> Australian Division fought gamely, against tremendous odds. The world was shocked by the stories of barbaric atrocities performed by the yellow hordes.

The Australians became bitter, they wanted revenge for their brothers in arms who had proven their metal in Malaya. Now for the first time the Allies have the upper hand & are exacting their powers to rid the world of this scourge.

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NX15719

Pte J. Dickinson  
"A. Coy

AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND  
VICTORIAN DIVISION

With Which is Affiliated

R.S.L. War Service  
Fund

Y.M.C.A.



The Salvation  
Army

Y.W.C.A.

Sgt. F. J. Boreham

4X150.2.

Lesson Learned from New  
Guinea Campaign

In Mansions 'Dominions'. An  
old master hung in a conspicuous  
nook on the classroom wall, was  
no doubt designed to inspire  
the young Briton with the  
correct British tradition. The  
picture depicting a knight of  
old, armor clad, riding  
undaunted down through the  
twilit depths of a denizen  
haunted forest, could well have  
been a portrait of his modern  
counterpart; the man in jungle -  
green seeking his enemy in the  
jungle fastness. All those

2/8  
Qualities attributed to an illustrious knightly  
warrior he must possess. Fearlessness, faith,  
control and confidence in his superiority to things  
antagonistic and in his warlike art.

What part do the modern warriors have to  
combat? Mostly the demon doubt which rumours  
has reared to an exaggerated height, sponsored  
by magnified stories about the enemy's  
powers and peerlessness as a jungle fighter.

After all, jungle or desert, sea or sky, an  
enemy is an enemy and among his many  
other human attributes has his limitations, as  
those who are willing to seek soon discover.  
As they did in the case of the supposedly

3  
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The Salvation  
Army

Y.M.C.A.

Y.W.C.A.

unique Aprika loops;  
so much for the  
mythical rumours that have  
been woven around Nipper.  
As for the hardships occasioned  
by climatic and geographic  
conditions, though trying  
certainly, a little of the originality  
and tenacity with which we  
are credited surmount these  
difficulties a die cutter's  
undaunted spirit carry his  
party across fetid Darwin  
to gaze for the first time on  
the Pacific, or Drake. sawy-  
froid to scorn and despise  
the night of Spain. The  
Trite time-worn observation,  
'One man's meat is another  
man's poison', is applicable.

4  
I don't think the Jap meant to a fighting man? Old  
Aesop had a fable that told of a pilgrim laboring  
uphill with a hand cart in tow. The weight  
of the handcart didn't amount to much, but  
the wheels being clogged with mud weren't  
functioning smoothly. Neither will ours  
if we don't look to the mechanism.

The mechanism of warfare is a phrase  
used freely, usually by men who have only a hazy  
appreciation of its meaning. How does it apply to jungle  
warfare? The mechanism of a machine is that  
in discernable position in hub and

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concealed behind plates. It  
is the mechanism of the army.  
The casual observer sees  
heavy plodding infantry  
crossing the fates that drew  
him to his particular branch  
of the service, despite the fact  
that other arms have their  
particular grievances, but  
give little heed to the problem  
pertaining to the delivery of  
supplies necessary to keep him  
plodding. Supply is an aspect  
of army life guaranteed to two  
the ingenuity of the most long  
suffering quartermasters in the  
New Guinea theatre. Rarely do  
the elements conspire to lighten  
his responsibilities. Among America's  
contributions to the war was the jeep

to possibly rank amongst the most valuable. Like  
the ubiquitous Australian it can go anywhere.  
Together with its ponderous cousin bulldozers to  
pioneer the way it will ferret out the most  
isolated outpost to bring in supplies. The  
the allocation of jeeps however is insufficient to  
meet demand. More should be assigned to units  
or better still, the improved eight wheel tractor  
model put into more extensive operation as soon as  
possible. Undoubtedly a popular innovation would  
be the upholstering of seats, at least among  
the 2. M personnel who are privileged to ride  
in them. What's the commotion! Cheers of ribald



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laughter or hysterical mirth?  
Measure its value, the gain to  
its limitations. Not so the  
infantia. He carries on where  
the others leave off and will  
no doubt continue to do so,  
till the great energies gather  
him in, with the assistance  
of his capricious counterpart  
the 'Boony'. The latter, though  
treated with deference due to  
a worthy ally, isn't always  
given credit for the natural  
wit common to native races.  
We flatter him and rob his  
further for taroo root, treat  
him manly only and ambush  
his senescence, but have little  
sympathy for the concern he  
displays when handed a

8  
1/2 load of ration to carry, an offhandedly a  
if he were an ordinary soldier. To dispense  
with unnecessary handling and confusion at  
advanced echelon load could be issued in  
suitably convenient containers always packed  
at base for distribution. Moreover such  
containers would hold the complete ration  
for a particular number of troops thus  
circumventing the need to sort out supplies  
at an advanced station. Were such a  
course adopted, distribution to units and  
sub-units under the same administration, ~~would~~  
but scattered over a comparatively wide area.

93  
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would be simplified. Such a policy would prove particularly advantageous where time is the essence of the contract, notably on a beach-head where we have the added dangers of enemy intervention. The emphasis so far seems to have been on ration, but after all you know what Napoleon said. Within the confines that a <sup>pre</sup> ~~post~~ loading policy would eliminate as regards the unloading of cargo craft. Were the goods to be delivered already loaded on trucks or sledges that could be run or hauled off immediately the ship ground valuable time would be saved.

10  
Mention has already been made of enemies  
to be combated apart from our very human  
enemy. Diseases are rife in these regions and  
account for most of our casualties. From the  
point of view of the rank and file there are not  
altogether to be despised and are treated  
with mingled feelings. <sup>Pleasant</sup> ~~Favourable~~ Anticipation  
at the prospect of a temporary release from  
goumment affairs and anxiety at the thought  
of possible bad after effects. (Very worry  
about that. Post-war rehabilitation will take  
care of them). To do him justice his fine  
chivalrous feelings are stung when he regards

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11  
his vaccination from an  
area where he saw as ~~the~~  
~~most good use~~ his knowledge  
to the best advantage in the  
light of an encumbrance on  
the army. In the mind  
aliments rather than the  
major complaint such as  
malasia and typhus which,  
provided we observe the  
precautions suggested to us,  
are beyond our control, that  
cause the most inconvenience.  
Cramp due to excessive  
sweating and subsequent loss  
of salt is one of the most  
inconvenience one has to  
suffer. The remedy lies in  
the liberal use of salt or  
salt tablets (if you can get

them). The average healthy fellow shouldn't  
be worried too much by such provisions  
he has all the preventative medicine issued  
to him. Battle casualties come under a  
different category. Glanders has claimed a  
few victims whose wounds under normal  
circumstances would have responded to treatment.  
Application of sulphamimidazole to open  
wound or injection of anti-glanders  
serum is an antidote, but the difficulties lie  
in the difficulty of having such medicine right  
on the spot. Casualties are usually sustained  
at some inaccessible spot away from medical

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13

aid beyond that afforded by the stretchers because whose means are limited. The solution to the problem seems insoluble unless the powder that he can be convinced that was itself a solution to any problem. It might be sufficient to the reader that those little vitamin abundant ascorbic tablet make a good substitute for baking powder. 'Head down and nose up' might be alright on some occasion but carelessly assume it an expression that can lead to calamitous results on the writer has proved to his cost. In any case it's an axiom but forgotten in this type

of warfare in which we're now engaged. Occasions  
do undoubtedly arise when we wish we could  
mimic imitate an enemy but rather than  
that, we must imitate the behaviour of a tiger both  
in the manner of movement and action. For the  
most part operations consist of a glorified game  
of hide and seek with life or death as the stake.  
We must learn to emulate and even surpass those  
masters of the draw, Han along Cassidy or that  
famous Holey wood gunman Gene Antary. Seize  
the initiative on all occasions and hold it. Watch  
cunning with super-cunning. Hoist the little yellow  
bustard on his own petard. Throat him till

MALAYA  
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 210



15

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he speak for mercy. Escape  
his infamy to the censure  
of his gullible Asiatic brethren  
and to the ridicule of an  
outraged world.

Forsooth I talk too much!

This sounds too much of a  
policy speech or a journalistic  
eulogy, and we have a surfeit  
of that. Let us withdraw to  
within the comparative security  
of our perimeter defence and  
gaze dispassionately on our  
particular zone. Perimeter  
defence were the only logical  
answers to German incursions  
against Tobruk, so are they  
here on a lesser scale the  
counter to Japanese infiltration  
tactics. Really a modification

16  
of the old British square idea except that was  
in those days developed more into a series of  
short sharp skirmishes with supply problems  
less acute than they are now. In the jungle  
the practice is to lay out down for the night,  
or for an extended period, dependent upon  
circumstances, on some feature that lends  
itself to all round defence, and by virtue  
of the fact that it is usually the crest of a  
hill, guard against surprise. The objective  
of any attack is usually the gaining of some  
such dominating feature, for the vastness of  
the terrain precludes extensive operations. The

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17

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platoon and section become the medium of operation rather than larger, more unwieldy formations. A situation arises where a platoon that has occupied a feature is isolated, a situation devoutly to be guarded against, but never the less to be accepted as a distinct possibility. The commander is now confronted with two alternatives, to remain and hope that relief will reach him, or to set off in an endeavour to reach his own line. The former course appears to be the one to adopt as the patrol should have arrived on its objective with supplies sufficient for three

18 days by which time communication should have been restored. Water might not be available, even in the land of interminable rain, in which case the latter alternative will be resorted to.

'Loud Erat Dem on trandum!'

Immediately after the fall of Lae the press advertised the fact that the 7th beat the 9th Div. into that fortress by a matter of hours.

Be that as it may, "Then came the screaming headline in the papers, 'The 7th beat the 9th Div into Lae.'

We could have beat the 7th in quite easy. But we woke up that the screaming wouldn't pay.

29  
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to quote the word of a song  
composed by one of our number.  
A word or two to elucidate  
my reason for diverging from  
the discussion of military tactics.  
Scrounging, or looting or collecting  
what you may become a habit  
with all ranks; a respect of  
neither rank nor creed. When  
one considers the monetary  
affluence to be acquired by the  
sale of aforesaid loot to  
larger purchasers - no implied  
reference to any particular  
soul - the reason for this  
apparent readiness to rob the  
dead isn't hard to find. The  
story runs that an order has  
already been placed by a  
certain person, with a Sydney

from Japa Chan and Japanese flags, but I  
advise the reader to treat this information  
with reserve. The great firm of Macouckie  
during the last war was suspected of  
employing a thousand extra hands to manufacture  
plum stones, so any thing is possible.

Quinine footbath

Recipe for Jungle - Juice

Drain juice from one coconut, add curant,  
raisins or sultanas, mix with contents of

one small bottle of essence of lemon and add  
a dash of canned heat. Flavour with fruit

juice and allow concoction to stand for 2  
weeks, but stand back in case of penitence explosion

The Amphibious Landings at  
Lae + Finschhafen  
by the 9 Aust. Div.

Nx 4/8041

Pte Scudder J. G.

C Coy.

23 Nov 1943

It was raining the day we left Milne Bay. It was raining hard & a more than usually fervent tribute was being paid to the departing troops by whatever God it is who presides over New Guinea rainfall. We had slushed our way from camp down to the beach & were waiting to board the craft which would take us to our first campaign in the Southern World.

Standing there on the beach we must have looked like mobile sponges. Not that being wet in New Guinea matters much — one becomes accustomed to that — it's the process of becoming thoroughly wet that's so damnably uncomfortable. Equipment was placed so as to be protected, as well as possible, from the weather, whilst the owners huddled around in small groups, smoking camp cigarettes. The word went around that the first lot would not be boarding until 09:30 hrs so the groups settled down for the three-quarter-hour wait. A few energetic souls filled in the time by knocking down coconuts & passing the juice around for general distribution, some gazed impatiently across the grey bay, anxious for the barges which would take them to their ship, whilst others just chain-smoked & talked. drifting through the sodden atmosphere was the badinage & bright chatter which is ever present with a body of troops.

"Right — 'C' Coy, prepare to move" — & the rain-soaked, green assemblage reshuffled into another pattern. Webbing slung on, followed by haversack & roll. "Where's my bloody rifle?" "Have you got a match, Bill?" — loudly to an individual sniggered under, by accentuation of War. "Who wants leave?" "For these are wonderful days —" sung fortissimo. A general movement down to the water's edge. The barges pulling in, filling up, & quickly away again. The husky chug-chug-chug of the barges bouncing across the bumpy bay. Climbing, pack-heavy, aboard the destroyer, the smiling faces of Yanks, & then down to dump our gear. The smell of the ship, the smell of salt-water & upstairs again to see Milne Bay through the murky grey sleet. It's the 2 Sep 1943 & we're off to Lae — to War.

It was good to see those Yanks again on the "Saus." We had trained with them & a more generous, friendly, Goddam' crew, it would be hard to find. In our previous training relations with them a cordial comradeship was begun which reached a climax of hand-shaking, cigarette-giving camaraderie, now that the Real Thing was on. The best food they had was cooked for us, the canteen was thrown open to us, & the ship's Commander presented each man with five packets of cigarettes. They "Buddy'd" us & we "Yank'd" them & an atmosphere was thus conjured up, which soaked our legs in high-spirits & kept them soaked until the hour of Lae arrived.

The next day we were well on our way & the full convoy was formed. I shall never forget that convoy as long as I live. The ordered array of craft of all shapes & sizes — someone counted fifty-three — moving resolutely forward; & when the afternoon sun ~~shone~~ provided a backcloth of gold, I felt that this was an experience — all other things excluded — well worth the risk of death.



On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (around 1000 hrs) some of the ships pulled into Buna & discharged their human loads for a few brief hours. While these patronised the shore canteen & stretched their ship-cramped legs, the destroyers stood off the bay & kept a sentinel watch. The fading rays of the sun saw all aboard again & the convoy moving off on its second - & final - stage to the Strickland Gulf. ~~On~~ On our left the shadows were deepening the lush green that is the coastline of New Guinea & on our right lay the silent, restless sea. Ahead was night through which we must trawl before we emerged into the first light of day.

I used to think in my "civvy" days that the Eve of the Battle must be a time of tumultuous emotional unrest - of nervous twistings & turnings - of wide-eyed wakefulness. I had been on deck breathing the tropic night & as I descended for a few hours sleep, this thought recurred. It was rudely shattered, however, when I reached below. The air was hot with sweat & steamy clothes & the racket of talk & laughter. To anyone not in the "know" it would have seemed that the only thing of importance to happen in the morning was bringing in the milk before the cat got at it. With this habble changing the air, I tumbled into my ~~low~~ bunk, & invoked a reluctant Morpheus to "come lie with me".

In what seemed a few minutes I was awakened & told that breakfast was "on". This meant that it was only an hour-and-a-half before we climbed over the side & would be on our way to the landing. The breakfast was good - spaghetti stew, rolls, butter & "coffee". The ship was a power-house of bustle. Gear arranged, magazines charged & a dash upstairs to attend to the requirements of Nature. That hour-and-a-half flashed by like nobody's business & as the clock-hands neared 0500, we were at our appointed stations - waiting. Someone called "Right - this is it" & the destroyer fairly spun the water & came to a dead stop. The four barges were lowered & over the side we went in a quiet, lumpy stream. The barges pulled away into line & the naval guns began to boom. The tracer shells whizzed high over us in a cross-cross pattern, as we scudded inshore. They thudded & banged on the jungle shore & echoed back from Hopei. Five hundred yards to go & the machine-guns on the barges opened up. They spat their glowing hate at the never-berating land, as the shore-line began to shape itself dimly. Nothing was coming back at us. Could there be anyone there? "Right - fix bayonets" & the click of cold steel split the morning air. The naval barrage had lifted, but machine-gun fire staccated a fierce orchestration. Still nothing coming back at us. We were going to land unopposed. Yet one must not be too sure. Another hundred yards & we would know. "Right - we're nearly there" - & the involuntary bracing of oneself for a scramble ashore. Just as the barge bumps the shore, the ramp lowered & we rush down to the water in file, reach the water's edge & spread out into line for the dash across the narrow strip of beach. The machine-guns cease their belching & we push through the dense jungle. Lawyer's were searing into the flesh, thick cane beaten into submission by shoulders & machetes, feet a swamp & muddy pants, sweat running into eyes & stinging. Fifty yards of fierce pushing & straining & we reach the pre-arranged spot for C & Q. And not a Jap to be seen or heard. As we paused & our breathing became less laboured the significance of this came to the forefront of our consciousness & formed a disappointing anti-climax. Off & back to Battalion with the message "Landed - awaiting to

plan, no enemy sighted" On my way back to Bn HQ, I walked along the beach & the morning light was beginning to strengthen. Our planes were coming over in rising force. Three Jap bombers came zooming along at a low altitude, & they were apparently clearing out from Lae, as they dropped no bombs. Bn HQ was a hive of busyness when I reached there. The Sigs. were connecting lines, messages coming in to the Int. Sec., attachment Offrs. conforming with the C.O., whose hairy eyes were appraising the set-up.

So the amphibious landing at Lae was a success. We had done our part to make the way safe for the rest of the Division, who would shortly commence their excursion ashore at Red Beach - the next beach down the Gulf. The bull-dozers would soon be tearing the earth apart to widen tracks & make new ones. Patrols are already on their way. The air is humming with our air cover, shepherding the main convoy ashore. As for the rest of it, well, the world knows all about it by now - how the Japs fought a feisty rearguard action, while the main body fled ignominiously into the hills. For our part, the Bn. moved to the next beach eastward, leaving only "C" Coy in the Yellow Beach area. From this position a party of Japs were routed out of Haper Mission. Then came - after a week - the march to Lae, the announcement that the Japs had evacuated the area, when we were at Malahang Mission, & the trek back to Red Beach. ~~From~~ It was announced at this juncture that the 20 Bde would continue & make another amphibious landing at Finschhafen. ~~This landing~~ And thus commences the second half of this story.

Although it was only 17 days since we had landed at Lae, the time had been crammed with incident & as we sat on the shore at Red Beach on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep., Maline Bay seemed a long way behind us in memory & we were learning fast how to grapple with conditions of tropical warfare. The Finschhafen intention had been announced, & it was this:- the landing plan would be the same as at Lae, only on a smaller scale of course; the Bde would land at Scarlett Beach, about 7 miles north of Finschhafen; the 13 Bn would exploit south to Lunch Jetty; the 15 Bn would move further south & 17 Bn would move through these Bns & take Finschhafen. This part of the campaign was to take only a matter of days.

Sitting on the beach waiting for darkness to provide a cloak for our embarkation, we were wrapped in a warm glow of confidence. Finschhafen should be a "snack" after Lae. After all, it had been mainly a convalescent camp & the Japs should not have many strong fortifications there. Lae had been his main base. Thus three of us were talking, holding a post-mortem on the past days & paraphrasing things to come. It was pleasant lying on the beach in the cool hush of early evening, smoking & "shorting the leg." We were contented. Our conversation was punctuated by a gun firing way up right of the beach. A quizzical eyebrow was raised by one of us. A second gun joined the first. Two quizzical eyebrows were

were raised by two of us. Then the air rang with discordant  
clangs as a host of other guns joined the concerto. About four  
Jap planes (I don't want to count them) careered from nowhere  
right onto us. Six quizzical eyebrows unceremoniously belted  
flungwards. We thought that we had been sighted & we were  
"in" for a bombing & strafing. But no! the planes made for  
the ships & commenced to attack. The ships put up a strong  
ack-ack barrage & in a few minutes the bombers had gone,  
leaving no damage behind. When I emerged from my  
jungle retreat the sky was heavy with the black cotton wool  
of ack-ack fire; but all was peace again. Groups formed  
along the beach & laughingly reconstructed the incident. The  
meditation of evening was smashed & soon the barges would be  
pulling in to take us once more to our ships.

It was after eight o'clock before we were  
safely escorted on the destroyer. The night was warm & the deck  
was littered with sprawling bodies. The ship was riding at anchor,  
& high above, the tropic stars were floating & tumbling. Nowhere  
the air was warm & serene, & cigarette smoke hung about in thin  
wisps. I "turned in" for a cigarette & slumber, for this would be a  
short trip. Lying there, I thought that this time we must meet  
some opposition; the ship could not clear off again. I thought  
that there would be some, now present, who would fall & that  
families, now happy, would be struck with the ordeal of loss;  
but I also thought that our success would take us another step  
forward to our goal & to the time when we would not walk daily  
in the shadow of travail. Despite the listlessness around me  
I slipped off to sleep. I slept soundly & was awakened only by  
the noise of chaps passing my bunk. I opened my eyes to a  
familiar scene, which took me back to the early morning of the  
landing at Lae - the glare of electric lights, the busy troops moving  
here & moving there & the talk, talk, talk. The crew shouting  
instructions to one another & their hurried performance of duty.  
There was an absence of flurry - we all felt we had done this  
a hundred times before.

A quarter of an hour before time we were  
assembled up on deck. It was dark & bodies were shadows. A  
quiet tenseness hung over the company, like a thin veil. Would this  
be another Lae, or ...? The shore gave no clue; as yet, it was a  
purple black. A warm breeze played skittishly about & this did not  
feel like war. The ship suddenly increased speed & in no time  
was slicing through the water, flat out. This was the final rush  
to the halting spot. The destroyer tumbled to a stop & then came  
the familiar cry "Lower Barges". Bursts of sulphurous light  
left from the crew supporting ships, behind us. The shells  
streaked through the sombre morn'g & burst like the crack  
of doom. It was our "Good Morning" to the Japanese; but,

churlishly they ignored it. The air quivered with the flash & crash of these naval shells. The morning was split with sound.

Meanwhile, the barges had taken up formation & were moving in relentlessly. We were due to hit the shore at 0530. It was pitch black & impossible to discern anything resembling the shoreline. I felt a little confused as though my mind were indulging in a spot of suspended animation. I peered at the other chaps crouched in the barge & couldn't learn anything from their masks. I thought it must be good to be. God & knew what was going on behind all those waiting eyes. At home the folks would be abed, breathing out their <sup>last</sup> nocturnal sighs, before commencing the day's work. The morning stillness would be broken only by the clash of milk-cans. In the heart of our "timeless land" the people of the soil would be already astir, battling with a new day. It would not be long before the train & train strategists, from the security of the slight silcock, would be mouthing their piece - gleaned from the early press. And soon "another amphibious landing" would take place - in five minutes it would happen, for our machine-guns were spitting their rat-a-tat-tat at the shore.

The terrain kept its silence-unbroken. My barge was the second on the left flank & slightly ahead of the others. "Fix bayonets" & I knew it would not be long now. The shore still seemed & sullen. The grating of the barge bottom on a reef, the ramp let down & out we filed ~~it~~ was. In the darkness the outline of a low cliff could be discerned & we followed along the face of it.

Suddenly, from ~~up~~ on our right a shell broke loose. A battery of machine-guns barked at the barges which were landing opposite them. Death & destruction was in the air. So there were gaps here & our boys were into them. While this maelstrom was making the hell in us, my group (Coy HQ) stumbled its way onto higher ground & moved in a westerly inland direction. Covering about 50 yards & meeting with no opposition we stopped & formed a temporary HQ. Word came through that 15 Pl had encountered 5 gaps & hastily despatched them to the arms of their Sun God. These were the men who had been on the barge at our left & landed the furthest south. But from the main body, there was no news. Sig lines were being laid & I was despatched to find Bn HQ with the events of our particular landing.

Some time elapsed before I located Bn HQ, as the opposed landing had necessitated a slight alteration in plans. On my way there I saw the elaborate entrenchments dug by the gaps & their strongly constructed pill-boxes - but not strong enough. I also saw some fat dead - ugly in death.

at the end of the day at 4:40 that the opposition had been  
spitting stuff - that the Gap had taken some digging out  
I learned that our boys had encountered some sticky  
going & were temporarily forced to retreat. I was told  
that some of the boys fell on the beach - that some  
had "shuffled off their mortal coil". But joyously I  
was told that The Gap had peddled off - probably  
to Sattelberg. Again he had employed his favourite  
move - cozzling off when the pressure becomes strong.

In the full light of day I inspected  
his positions on the beach & was struck once more  
by his love of digging in. The communication  
trenches, the ~~too~~ deep fox holes - all ~~of~~ characteristic  
of the Gap. Coming back, I saw, lying in the jungle  
green, one of our boys, clothed in the shroud of death. I  
had known him, & ~~was~~ I became flushed with a  
blind, unreasoning rage, that he should fall a victim  
to those rotten, yellow bastards. There was someone  
waiting for him at Home, who would suffer because these  
yellow people had dared to strike at our Land.

I thought again of those others at Home  
the train & tram ones ~~who~~ who would soon  
be pouncing on the mudday edition to gorge their minds  
& disseminate their chatter through the city air. But the others  
came to my mind - the anxious ones with a link in  
these tropic wilds, the army of workers our second line of  
defense, & I thought of those way out in the friendly  
hills of Home who suckle the good earth. I knew  
these were with us & part of us - people who  
form the heart of our great Land, people who  
realise & appreciate what is being done for them up here,  
who think of those who have made the supreme  
sacrifice "at the going down of the sun, & in the  
morning."