

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

**Item number: 8/2/17**

**17 Infantry Brigade**

**January 1941, Reports, part 1 of 2**

3 Jan. 41.

17 Aust. Inf. Bde. Intelligence Summary No. 6.

Based on information at this H.Q. up to 2000 hrs. 2 Jan. 41.

Ref. Maps BANDA N. and S. 1:50,000 Green overprint.

General. 2/5 Bn. moved to area 505586.Hostile Shelling. 1 Jan 41.

<u>Time</u>	<u>No of Shells</u>	<u>Area Shelled</u>	<u>Damage</u>	<u>Nature</u>	<u>No. of guns</u>	<u>G or H</u>
1055	10	L front Coy area Ref 513387	Nil	B	5 - 5	G
1056	3	do.	"	B	3	-
1107	4	do.	"	B	4	G
1112	2	do.	"	B	2	G

Air Activity. Our aircraft have been very active throughout the day. Isolated enemy bombers were observed.Enemy Activity. Working parties were observed in WADI 520585 and were protected by arty and mortar fire when our patrols tried to contact them.Patrol Reports. Report of FNCA "A" Patrol - Night 1/2 Jan 41.

With my patrol I actively reconnoitred the enemy wire and minefields from Point T.M. Junct. of A/T Defence and Rd 51463909 to Pt. 51565900, Junct. of Rd. and minefield to Point 51753894, and observed the following.

I first contacted the enemy at Pt. T.M., Junct. of A/T Defence and Rd. 51463909. The wiring at this point is double, about 6 to 8 feet apart, with heavy entanglement between. There is also a pathway over the A/T obstacle at this point about 5 feet wide, which leads to the wire about 100 paces to the rear of the A/T obstacle. At this point I noticed the enemy working on the wire, also men patrolling and they appeared to be strengthening.

I kept on the inside of the A/T obstacle till I came to the junction of Point 51563900. Here there were two wires, the first single and the rear Dannert wire about 7 feet high. Also there are two buildings, but I was unable to make out just what they were. The only movement here was two men patrolling the wire for about 100 yards.

I continued for about 600 yds and then came across what appeared to be a deep pit covered over with wood, point 51633897, and went S.W. While reconnoitring two enemy heard my approach and opened fire with small arms but I was able to get away over the pathway across the A/T obstacle. There did not appear to be any fixed lines over this pathway. I did not open fire because it appeared that it was fairly strongly held by L.M.C. as well as riflemen. There were approximately 5 or 6 flares put up.

The A/T obstacle is about 16 ft. wide and 7 or 8 ft. deep. At rear of obstacle there is a large quantity of boulders, about 2 1/2' in diameter. I then returned through spot height 165 51695889 to lines, arriving 0500 hrs. 2 Jan.

FNCA "D" Patrol Report - 1/2 Jan. 41.

We reached point 51753894 and proceeded to make a recon. of wiring and A/T defences. The wiring in front of enemy trenches consisted of two double apron fences which were side by side. There was no concerting wire in between them.

We moved S.E. along A/T trench to minefield at 51745883. The A/T trench North of the minefield averages 12 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Just East of the minefield it is about 20 feet wide and two to three feet deep. NONE of it that I saw has concrete sides. It has evidently been blasted out. The rocks from the trench have been strewn thickly on both sides of the A/T trench. About every 2/300 yards along it there are bridges about 3 feet wide which are formed by unexcavated earth. I think these would prevent M.Cs. from having effective fixed lines of fire along the A/T trench.

As the A/T trench goes S.W. to Defence Post 19 and South from it, it again deepens and narrows to about 10 feet deep and 12 feet wide.

The minefield is laid out as follows. The mines are in rectangular holes 4 feet long, about 8 ins. wide and 4 to 8 ins. deep. We walked on the edges at odd times and it appears quite safe to move about it on foot. It would be quite easy for a patrol to put lights at each corner of it if lights could be supplied which were visible from the air and shielded from the ground.

As we approached the wire near Defence Post 19, we were fired at by the sentry. We lay quiet for a while then crawled away.

The wiring from D.P. 19 and D.P. 17 was also the 2 double apron type. We moved to the east side of the A/T trench. An enemy patrol of three men passed along inside the wire going from D.P. 17 to D.P. 19. They returned ten minutes later but still inside the wire and followed, at about 60 yds interval, by a stronger party of 9 or 10. These patrols are noisy in crossing the ground and talkative. They passed within 15 yds. of half patrol but did not see them. I did not open fire on them as I could not have got inside the wire to secure any identifications.

As we approached D.P. 17 we were seen by the sentries who opened fire on us. Most of the shots were wild and we withdrew without one casualty.

Owing to the time taken to withdraw from the posts I decided to move back to our lines.

I saw nothing of interest in the enemy lines. There was no movement except for the sentries and the patrols. The sentries are very alert but fire too soon and after firing give their position away by talking and moving.

I reported in to WING "D" at 0500 hrs. 2 Jan.

#### Conclusion.

The enemy is now very much on the alert and appear to be now conserving ammunition for the expected attack.

Signed at 0900 hrs.

#### DISTRIBUTION :

As for I. Summary No. 5.

Lieut.  
B.I.O. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

27/28 Dec. The Bde commenced taking over the line on the night of 27/28 Dec. By the night of 2/5 Jan we had edged forward to within a hundred yards or so of the enemy defences; patrols had again been active in seeking information and delousing mines and several engagements were fought which gave us the first prisoners captured by Australians in this war. We had thus fulfilled our prior role of misleading the enemy to a belief that the attack would come from our area or therein; we had drawn seven or eight Regts, each of four bns:

Our role in the battle was to continue this ~~same~~ deception by the action of one bn; while the rest of the bde. attacked at a point 10,000 yds to the North. They would advance South towards the fresh bn who would rope in the enemy prisoner. The starting point for these operations was the line held which covered 16,000 yds. The 2/6 moved along the rough Wadis under cover of darkness to demonstrate against the enemy at dawn on the 3 Jan. Their role was to gain close contact and pen them down on their front which they soon did. The enemy responded soon with protective arty fire which was maintained in the greatest intensity until the morning of the 3rd day of the battle. Post 11 garrisoned by selected enemy troops raked the 6th with fire while from other areas 7 counter attacks were launched and repelled. The 6th added undying lustre to the already illustrious record of that regt by its action at BARDIA which was of the greatest importance to the general operation. Their steadiness under intense shellfire their ~~steadiness~~ ~~under intense~~ attacks under M.G. fire and the final capture of Post 11 have never been surpassed.

The 2/5 plus 2 coys 2/7 were destined to open the advance from the North. The 5th commenced to move at midday on the 2nd and the coys of the 7th at dawn on the 3rd. They were to take up the running up on the BARDIA rd where another bde finished its Southern move; after a most trying night the 5th were in position on time ready to attack when the C.O. was wounded. Worse still the expected tanks did not arrive but at Zero the advance started on a front of approx 2500 yds. They were met by unlocated field guns firing over open sights and M.G.s and mortar fire of great intensity. The raking fire of the guns to their left flank brought the 5th to a standstill while the coy of the 7th further right advanced with great difficulty. An officer of the 5th gathered a platoon and by an incredible movement silenced and captured a 40 guns and captured over 2000 PWS. The advance then continued but our bqrage had been lost; so it was a case of fighting supported by our own weapons only.

We were then moving against the enemy strength we had previously drawn into the pocket on a depth of 10000 yds. They fought with guns blazing over open sights and shot at our troops with MGs and mortars which slowed up the advance. Touch between coys was impossible as each turned to fight newly disclosed enemy elements. By nightfall our advance tps were 3000 yds out. They had then captured over 5000 pws about 60 guns besides A/Tk guns MGs and mortars but the situation was terribly confused.

The 8th had brought their last coy into the battle late in the afternoon. Fortunately 2 were available to keep the fight going while the coys engaged were reorganised and dangerous gaps in the flank were filled.

Our losses in officers had been heavy and 2 had been treacherously shot after enemy elements had surrendered. At 9 O'clock that night the situation was an nightmare

a nightmare but not incapable of solution.

Two coys of the 7th fought forward another 1500 yds in darkness and the 5th covered the flank and supported the forward tps.

Day broke with the situation secure and fighting still going on. The work during the night was by bomb and bayonet and the exploits of the tps mostly led by young subalterns was magnificent. Control, movt, and mutual fire support was applied more correctly than ever on an exercise which was the chief factor to success. By dawn ; 12 enemy Bns had been accounted for and further guns etc were taken. During the second day patrols of one or two carriers roped in more prisoners and the infantry added to the further total of over 6000. Under cover of night further advances were made by the depleted coys who fought in their posts until a way had been cut through his wire. In each post was a garrison never less than 70 and at POST 11 over 400.

In some places the fighting was so intense that we were unable to get our wounded out until the battle ended but the tps still pressed on which was their only salvation. To secure the fwd move advances were made against enemy reserves on our flank. These actions gave us the bulk of our prisoners.

Dawn on the third day found us still fighting and under intense arty and mortar fire when another bde advanced on our left and created a threat to the enemy that eased the situation. Our tps weary beyond words pressed forward captured POST 11 and soon cleaned up the balance on our front. Our role was this fulfilled in its entirety but only by the superb fighting qualities of our tps supported magnificently by Victorian gunners particularly by their counter battery work on the southern sector and fire on the enemy posts in that vicinity:

## Battle of Tobruk

The Battle of Tobruk will go down in history in which fighting was the exception. It would appear that the enemy considered the staging of an attack sufficient to vindicate his surrender with honor. As at Bardia I7 Aust. Inf. Bde. were denied any opportunity for spectacular results but had ample opportunity for work of real value. The 2/6 Bn. were selected to assist the Brigade responsible for the break-through. They covered a distance of 22 miles to enter the perimeter and led the attack in a central position. At only one Post did the enemy fight but the 6th soon stopped that business. They continued on to the head of the Wadi which was the limit of their exploitation.

The Role of the 2/7 Bn. was to enter the perimeter and relieve another Bn. as early as possible and then exploit to a line abreast the 6th. Prior to this task and before Zero, the 5th and 7th demonstrated by fire against the enemy right flank to draw his attention from the main point of entry. They both did a good job. It was felt that the 7th may have difficulty in crossing the mine-field and anti-tank ditch which would probably not be bridged as they arrived. During the hours of darkness on the 21st. special patrols "deloused" the mine-field. To facilitate the crossing of the anti-tank ditch ladders, picks and shovels were carried. The 7th. arrived on time and soon completed the relief and exploitation without a casualty.

The 5th. Bn. who had been brought to handy position during the night, advanced to the perimeter when exploitation was complete. They advanced some three miles under shell-fire with perfect steadiness. During the march a new Role forced a change of direction. They swung round and moved on as if on parade. Previous study envisaged probable work, which was supplemented by early reconnaissance. This permitted the 7th. to relieve the 6th. and add their front to their line. They also provided patrols(fighting) to clean up the Wadis at first light.

An enemy Fort armed with Naval guns had caused us some trouble so it was determined to capture it at first light on 22nd Jan. A coy of 6th Bn., supported by a Bty. of Arty., advanced over 3000 yards to deploy for attack. The enemy saw them and the move and surrendered. Over 400 prisoners and 4 = 6", 6- 3" naval guns was the prize.

The 5th. who had helped another Bde. on the 21st. were now back and continued the advance to the limit within our area. The 6th. Bn. were now helping ~~another~~ the other Bde. marching on Tobruk. They captured important territory with out loss, and marched another 16miles on the 22nd. Jan.

The 7th. Bn. cleaned up all enemy elements in the Wadis by midday on the 22nd. Our front was thus clear of enemy and we had gained ground not contemplated at the commencement of the Action. We had secured flank protection for the Bde. destined to march on Tobruk and thus a reasonably good job was completed. Over 3000 were taken and many guns, M. G.s etc. were part of the bag.

Ref. Maps : DERNA  
GIOVANNI BERTA  
MARTUBA  
CHAULAN

1:100,000

*Spare*  
SECRET.

Copy No...8..

31 Jan. 41.

17 Aust. Inf. Bde. Op. Instr. No. 14.

1. Indications are that enemy is preparing to withdraw WEST towards GIOVANNI BERTA.  
19 Aust. Inf. Bde. has occupied DERNA and holds the line of WADI running S.E. from 290555.
2. The role of 6 Aust. Div. is to secure DERNA against enemy arty fire, and gain control of Rd. GIOVANNI BERTA - MACHILI as early as possible.
3. 17 and 19 Aust. Inf. Bdes. will advance on 31 Jan to the general line SIDI BU HADIA 1562 - AIN MARA 1051 - Pt 407 0834.
4. Inter Bde. Bdy - incl. 19 Aust. Inf. Bde. Pt 557 0450 - Pt 390 2642.
5. *pick*  
A Sqn. 6 Aust. Cav will protect the left flank, and will establish patrols during the hours of daylight on Rd GIOVANNI BERTA - MACHILI South from rd. junction 970360.
6. *sign*  
17 Aust. Inf. Bde. will advance astride WADI DERNA.  
2/5 Bn. Gp. right, 2/6 Bn. Gp. left.
7. Right Group -  
Comd. - Lt-Col. R.H. King.  
Tps. under comd - 2/5 Bn.  
1 Coy. Cheshires.  
1 Tp. "J" Bty. R.H.A.  
  
Tps. in support - 1 Bty. 4.5 Hows : To move with Gp. for close support.  
1 Bty. 25 pdrs. : To support initial stages of advance from present positions then to follow in support.  
  
Left Group -  
Comd. - Major S.H.W.C. Parter  
Tps. under comd - 2/6 Bn.  
1 Coy. Cheshires.  
1 Pl. 17 Aust. A. Tr. Coy.  
1 Sec. 2/2 Fd. Coy. for clearing mines, and marking routes through minefields  
  
Tps. in support - 1 Bty. 18 pdrs. following in close support.
8. During night 30/31 Jan 2/5 Bn. will est. one Coy. astride Rd. at 2342 and, after clearing NORTH bank of WADI DERNA, another Coy. astride Rd. at 2040.  
During afternoon of 30 Jan. one coy. 2/6 Bn. will occupy WADI bend at 1936 and during night of 30/31 Jan under cover of a fighting patrol, will secure track crossing at 1639, or any other Rd. crossing EAST of that Pt. not shown on map.
9. 2/6 Bn. is responsible that this Coy. secures a bridge head on the NORTH BANK to cover the crossing.
10. 2/5 Bn. Gp. will advance via Rd. GIOVANNI BERTA North of W. DERNA.  
Method : (a) Coy. at 2342 will advance to vicinity 1640 and cover advance.  
(b) Coy. at 2040 will remain in position until all 2/5 Bn. Gp. have crossed WADI DERNA and will follow as a Rear Gd.  
(c) 2/5 Bn. (less 2 Coys) will cross WADI by route SOUTH BANK - WADI CROSSING - thence whole Gp. to objective covered by an Adv. Gd.

11. (a) 2/6 Bn. Gp. (less 1 coy at bridge head) will move from its present position via N.W. track from 1929 to 1333 thence along WADI, left coy. leading.

(b) On leading coy. 2/5 Bn. getting into position; 2/6 coy. will withdraw to SOUTH BANK, WADI DERNA, and move to track junc. in 1037 and cover Engineer party to objective.

12. C.O. 2/6 Bn. Gp. is responsible for contact with 2/5 Bn. Gp.

Should either Gp. be held by WADI Crossing or clearing minefields, the other will continue its advance.

13. 2/7 Bn. will be in reserve, and when ordered to do so, will move to area 1929. C.O. 2/7 Bn. is responsible for recce to this area.

14. Assembly areas.

2/5 Bn. (less fwd coys) in sqs 2336 and 2436.  
2/6 Bn. " " 2330 and 2331.

Units will signal code word SET when in assembly areas.

15. Start Line -

N.S. track between E.W. grids 21 and 22 and prolongation to NORTH.

16. Zero -

Not before 1000 hrs. The code word FIGHTER followed by the hour will be signalled to advise actual zero.

Admin.

17. Rations -

The unexpended portion of day's rations will be carried.

18. Water -

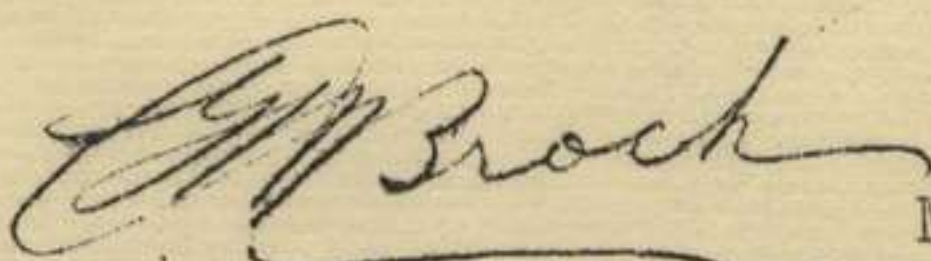
All water bottles filled.

19. Med.

(a) One amb. vehicle will accompany each gp.  
(b) A mobile amb. sec. will be established in the vicinity of 165390 when 2/5 Bn. gp. passes that pt. This position will be well marked by amb. flags.

20. P.O.L. P4537.

21. Amn. Pt. P3732.

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

DISTRIBUTION :

Copy No. 1	2/5 Bn.
2	2/6 Bn.
3	2/7 Bn.
4	"J" Bty. R.H.A.
5	1 Cheshire Bn.
6	Sec. 2/2 Fd. Coy.
7	2/2 Fd. Amb.
8	Comd.
9	B.M.
10	S.C.
11	2/2 Fd. Regt.
12	19 Aust. Inf. Bde.
13	6 Aust. Div.
14	File,
15 - 17	War Diary,
18 - 20	Spare,



145345  
SND VND

SOUND PERCH

1300

165340

1311

130340

SUHVNH

no more till 1415

1320

26 Jan '41.

N E W S S U M M A R Y No. 36.  
(Compiled from BBC B/cast.)

CAIRO: An Army communique issued in CAIRO last night indicated that our forward troops made contact with the enemy three miles East of DERNA. They destroyed four medium tanks and captured two. The number of prisoners captured at TOBRUCH is estimated to be just short of 20,000. Exceptionally large amounts of material were also taken over from the enemy. On all fronts in AFRICA the Italians are in retreat. In ERITREA 600 prisoners were captured including a Brigade Commander together with much transport. In ABYSSINIA our troops are now as far forward as NATELLA. In KENYA British forces are busy ejecting Italims who remain on British soil.

An RAF communique from Cairo states that enemy air-craft were bombed on the ground at DERNA and another aerodrome 45 miles from BENGASI and one at MARTURA were also damaged.

In Italian East Africa a railway and river transport were attacked by our planes. On the Island of Rhodes large fires were started by our bombers. From all these operations one fighter only was lost and that in LIBYA.

ROME: Italian communique now admits that resistance at TOBRUCH is at an end. 20,000 troops were in TOBRUCH and losses in material have been heavy, and urges the Italian people to make even greater efforts in face of these defeats.

WASHINGTON: Lord Halifax and Mr Cordell Hull had a conference which lasted one hour after which the former stated 'we see things very much alike'. In answer to press reporters ~~who~~ he replied that Germany lost the war in June 1940 when she failed to take advantage of England's weakness. No doubt in the spring we should see a great German attack but we shall meet that with success. We need and expect all possible help from America. Britain's newest and most powerful battleship, George V which took Lord Halifax to New York left again within 24 hours to return to her base.

SINGAPORE: Sir Charles Burnett, C in C of the RAAF arrived from Australia for a conference with the C in C of the Far East, emphasising the close co-operation existing various Empire forces.

RUMANIA: Attempted revolution has been sternly dealt with by General ANTONESCU who bitterly reproaches the Iron Guard for their treacherous behaviour. Thousands of lives have been lost and many more Iron Guards arrested. The firmness with which the rebellion was quelled has made a deep impression on the BALKAN countries. A curfew on all transport and public meeting places is in force. From now on all rebels will be shot on sight. General ANTONESCU made a speech in which he thanks his army for their assistance in crushing the rebellion, and is to form a new Govt. in which Extremists will be conspicuous by their absence.

AIR ACTIVITY. There was no enemy air activity over England last night and only small scale raids during the day. R.A.F. patrols and reconnaissances were carried out and a submarine base bombed.

BERLIN. From a neutral source comes the unconfirmed report that HITLER has demanded of Marshal PETAIN the use of TUNIS as a base for operations against the BRITISH in the Mediterranean, showing his growing anxiety for the fate of Mussolini's stricken Empire in the MIDDLE EAST.

(Sgd.) V.J. SCHOFIELD Lieut.,  
B.I.O. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

28/1  
vch.

ENGA.  
S E C R E T.  
Copy No.  
26 JAN. 41.

ORDER FOR MOVEMENT - 28 JAN. 41.

REF. MAPS : TOBRUCH 1:100,000.  
AIN EL GAZALA 1:100,000.  
BOMBA 1:100,000.  
DERNA 1:100,000.

INFORMATION :

1. Nil.

INTENTION :

2. ENGA will move by M/T. to DERNA Area.

METHOD :

3. Order of March -

"D" Coy.

Bn. H.Q.

"C" Coy.

"B" Coy. and dets. NOWA and CEHA.

"A" Coy.

H.Q. Coy. less No. 4 Pl. and dets. No. 2 Pl.

No. 4. Pl. receive separate instructions.

"A" Ech. vehicles.

"B" Ech. Vehicles.

4. S.P. Crossroads 383439. ORDER FOR MOVEMENT - 28 JAN. 41.

5. S.T. Leading elements ENGA pass S.P. 0830 hrs. 28 Jan. 41.

6. Speed and Density - 15 m.i.h., 12 v.t.m.

ADMIN :

7. R.A.P. with Bn. H.Q.

8. Maximum amount of water to be carried.

9. Two tins of petrol carried on each vehicle.

10. "A" and "B" Ech. vehicles report T.O. present area Bn. H.Q. by 0600 hrs. 28 Jan. 41.

11. N.Z. M/T. report T.O. 0600 hrs. 28 Jan. 41.

12. Embussing Officer - T.O.

13. T.O. to arrange for collection by 1700 hrs. 27 Jan. of I. Sec. NOWA, and I. Sec. CEHA at EL ADEM Airport and GAMBUT W.P. respectively. Secs. to report to and come under comd. O/C. "B" Coy.

14. Rations for 28 and 29 Jan. to be drawn by Q.M. and will be carried on Diesel M.T. supplied by SEAR.

15. 11 Drivers for Diesel M.T. will report to Q.M. 0630 hrs. 28 Jan.

INTERCOMM :

16. Bn. H.Q. closes present location 0630 hrs. 28 Jan. 41 thence reports head of column.

17. Two D/Rs. report Bn. H.Q. 0600 hrs. 28 Jan. 41.

18. No. 1 Pl. commence reeling in 0600 hrs. 28 Jan.

Signed at 2000 hrs.

A. P. CHAPMAN,

Distributed by D.R.

LIEUT. AND ADJUTANT ENGA.

DISTRIBUTION :

1. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

2. 17 Aust. Inf. Trg. Bn.

3. C.O. 4. Adj. 5. I.O. 6. R.Q.M. 7. R.M.O. 8. T.O.

9. A. Coy 10. B. Coy. 11. C. Coy. 12. D. Coy. 13. H.Q. Coy. 14-15. W.D.

6 AUST DIV.

SECRET.

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION. NO. 4

Copy No. 15.....

26 Jan 41.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAYOUT - TOBRUCH AREA.

Ref. Map: COMPOSITE TOBRUCH SHEET 1/100,000.

1. DIV. H.Q.

The whole of Div H.Q. is now at 40854325.

2. WATER.

- (a) Div water points have been established at 41334338 and 40984344. 17 Aust Inf Bde, Arty units 6 Aust Div Reception Camp and A.A.S.C. will draw at the former and all other units at the latter. 16 Aust Inf Bde will supply a guard of one complete Sec at each point. D.A.P.M. will arrange to supply two O.R.'s from the Provost Coy at each point to assist in traffic control and the proper dispersion of vehicles.
- (b) The scale of issue of water is  $\frac{1}{2}$  gal per man per day for personnel for all purposes. Arty Units may draw one gal per gun per day, and all units  $\frac{1}{2}$  gal per vehicle. Demands from Med units will be met.
- (c) C.R.E. will arrange to establish and keep filled, water points at P.W. Cage and enemy hospitals. A.D.M.S. will notify C.R.E. of location of the latter.

3. SUPPLIES.

Supply points have been established as under :-

- (a) For 17 Aust Inf Bde and attached units 42154240 at 1300 hrs.
- (b) For 16 Aust Inf Bde and attached units 41204355 at 1300 hrs.
- (c) For all other units 41154315 at 1300 hrs.

4. PETROL.

A petrol point has been established in square 413430.

5. AMMUNITION.

An ammunition point has been established in square 413430.

6. MEDICAL.

M.D.S.'s have been established at Hotel Tobruch 41434345. by 2/1 Fd Amb and at 42064260 by 2/7 Fd Amb. A staging post is established at 41354268.

7. ORDNANCE.

- (a) A vehicle Recovery Point has been established by 2/1 A. Fd. Wkshop at 41264349. Disabled vehicles to be evacuated for 2nd line repair and which do not require a suspended tow will be taken by L.A.D.'s and A.A.S.C. Wkshops located in TOBRUCH area to this point. Such casualties and also location of other breakdowns requiring suspended tow will be notified without delay to the S.O.M.E. Units will be responsible for safe custody of disabled vehicles until recovered by 2nd line organization.

P.T.O.

(b) Indents for Ordnance Stores will be submitted to D.A.D.O.S. in the usual manner.

8. SALVAGE.

Div Salvage Unit is located at 40854325. All units are responsible for collection of salvage in their own areas. Salvage will be delivered to Salvage Unit in 1st line tpt together with an inventory of material delivered.

9. PROVOST.

(a) T.C.P's are established at the following points to prevent the entry of unauthorized persons to Tobruch. All persons on duty must be in possession of a numbered pass issued by AQ Branch H.Q. 6 Aust Div or H.Q. XIII Corps. These passes will bear the imprint of the AQ office stamp.

- (i) Cross Roads 41314348
- (ii) Road Junction 41384348.

(b) T.C.P's are also established at :-

- (i) 40994201
- (ii) 42294233
- (iii) 41354266

(c) D.A.P.M. will maintain a mobile patrol of Tobruch Town to prevent looting and to ensure that unauthorized persons are removed.

10. PAY.

Pay may be drawn as required from Div Paymaster at Div H.Q.

11. POSTAL.

Normal arrangements through Sup. Col.

12. P.O.W.

A P.O.W. cage is established at 41334264. As from 1500 hrs 26 Jan 16 Aust Inf Bde will provide One Bn as guard, to ensure that prisoners are fed and watered.

13. BURIALS.

- (a) Div Cemetery is located at 42854135. Units are responsible for digging the necessary graves and for marking them.
- (b) Main P.O.W. Cemetery is located at 41324255. P.O.W. who die in hospital will be buried in location selected by S.M.O. who will report location and particulars to this H.Q.

14. R.E. STORES.

(a) A Div R.E. Store Dump is established in the vicinity of 2/2 Fd Pk Coy at 41304351. Demands for R.E. Stores will be submitted to C.R.E. not direct to 2/2 Fd Pk Coy.

15. DIV RECEPTION CAMP.

6 Aust Div Reception Camp is located at 41324341.

*Charles Priest*

COL.

26 Jan 41.

A.A. & Q.M.G. 6 AUSTR. DIV.

Distribution.

Copy No.

R.A.A.	1 - 3
R.A.E.	4 - 8
Sigs	9
16 Aust Inf Bde	10 - 14
17 Aust Inf Bde	15 - 18
A.A.S.C.	19 - 22
AD M.S.	23 - 26
D.A.D.O.S.	27
S.O.M.E.	28 - 29
Camp	30
D.A.P.M.	31 - 32
Fd Cash Office	33
Postal Unit	34
Salvage Unit	35
Div Reception Camp	36
Comd.	37
G.	38
A.	39
Q.	40
File	41 - 42
War Diary	43 - 44

For information.

XIII Corps.	45
19 Aust Inf Bde	46

5/8.3/GSI

*Wadi*COASTAL DEFENCES - CYRENAICA

TMIMI, GAZALA and BOMBA reported to be empty.

DERNA

Town is built on flat ground close to the sea, on both sides of the WADI DERNA, and connected by a stone br. The WADI is a natural obstacle, and the town is surrounded by a semi-circular wall 8 ft high which was constructed for the Libyan wars. Ground rises abruptly to 800 ft 2000 yds behind the town.

The defences are posted on the crest of the escarpment and consist of old AUSTRIAN guns.

Rd DERNA - BENGHASI is over a series of brs which carry the only road from the town.

GARRISON

NO GAF. 60 Div (HQ said to be at GIOVANNI BERTA.) 27 Div reported, but considered doubtful. 3 AA Btys in 1 line of three fixed btys supported by second line of 2 fixed Btys. NO other known fixed defences.

RAS BEN GEBARA - GIOVANNI BERTA - EL GHEBAB

ARABS report a line being prepared to protect the colonization centres. NO details known. A line further EAST would include the main water supply and seems more suitable than this posn.

Distribution -

16 Aust Inf Bde  
17 Aust Inf Bde ✓  
19 Aust Inf Bde  
RAA 6 Aust Div  
G (Circulate)  
File

*J. H. M. Collins*  
Int Sec,  
6 Aust Div.

22 Jan, 41.

SEAR O.O. No. 5.

Ref. Maps. TOBRUCH red overprint.  
TOBRUCH composite sheet.

Information.

1. Enemy as in Div. Int. summaries.
2. Own Tps. (a) 6 Aust. Div. and attached tps. will attack and capture TOBRUCH on D1 supported by R.N., R.A.F., R.A.L.F., 13 Corps and 7 Armd. Div.

The attack will be carried out in two phases.

(b) Phase I. PIPO (comd. TUBBY) with NOWA under comd. will break through perimeter between posts R55 and R57, supported by I tanks. Leading Bn. (CAMO) will cross S.L. at 0540 hrs. D1 and capture objectives as follows :

PEGO - Posts R77 - R76.  
NOWA - Trig 121 at 42194250 - pt 116 in 420425.  
AMAP - Area gun posns in 418424 - 417423.  
IDIR - " " " in 416423 - 415422.  
SAXO - " squares 414422 - 413421.  
CAMO - posts R44 - R47.

(c) Phase II - HORA (comd BOB) will cross S.L. at 0745 hrs. and capture objective area squares 416427 - 413427.

(d) Arty. CARI is in support of SEAR.

(e) Eng. will construct crossings at Posts R55 - R57, R65, R77 and R79.

Intention.

3. SEAR will co-operate in the attack on TOBRUCH.

Method.

4. (a) NOWA will move to assembly area in square 421413 after dark D - 1, coming under comd. PIPO at 2200 hrs. D - 1 and will pass S.L. at 0655 hrs. D1 under orders PIPO to objective.  
(b) UPOS (less sec.) will follow NOWA and place crossings at West of Posts R65 and R77 and East of Post 79.  
(c) CARI will detail a F.O.O. with NOWA. CEHA will provide a Vickers carrier with driver to report to SEAR H.Q. at 1200 hrs. D - 1. This carrier will be at disposal of comd. CARI for use of F.O.O.  
(d) Comd. NOWA will report comd. PIPO for orders forthwith.

5. Deception. (a) At 0540 hrs. D1, CEHA and ENGA will stage a demonstration by fire with M.M.Gs. and Mortars against ZEITUN, SIDI DAUD and SUESI sectors. Comds. will receive posns from which this fire can be brought to bear on selected targets in these areas. CARI will support this demonstration.  
Arty. Plan : Z - Z plus 15 posts Z81, R79, R76 and Z79.  
Z plus 15 - Z plus 30 same posts plus Z85 and Z87.

Note. Fulfillment of this role will not prejudice later roles by tps. becoming closely engaged with the enemy.

(b) After our arty. bombardment has commenced CEHA will fire captured enemy flares from posns North of BARDIA rd. Details advised later.

6. ENGA will adjust Coy. dispositions during night D-1/D1 and will move through selected checking point in 420417 by Coys. from left in succession to enter perimeter near Post R67 as tanks and PEGO pass its front. ENGA will relieve PEGO on its objective in succession of Coys., right, centre then left.

7. Tasks ENGA (a) Take over objective gained by PEGO.  
(b) Limit of exploitation area from which heads WADI ZEITUN can be covered by Mortar and M.M.G. fire. The advance will be limited to avoid any semblance of close engagement whatever in WADIS.



8. Picks. One pick will be carried by a man of each sec. of ENGA behind the haversack.
9. Wire cutters. will be worn on lanyards.
10. Ladders. Two will be carried by each Pl. ENGA in case the crossing is incomplete.
11. Carriers. During initial stages, 3" Mortar vehicles and wireless van with one 2" Mortar vehicle per Coy. only will move with the Bn. BOPO and NIXE absolutely essential vehicles only.  
"A" ech. vehicles ENGA will disperse in area.  
Present ENGA "D" at ready call.  
A ech. vehicles CEHA in area selected by comd CEHA.
12. Command. After NOWA has gained its objective and after ENGA has relieved PEGO, comd. SEAR will become responsible for the sector held by these units, NOWA reverting at that time.
13. Reserve. CEHA will adjust dispositions to enable them to be readily available for any further role as discussed with comd.
14. M.M.G. Coys. NIXE will remain under comd. ENGA and CEHA. One Pl. res. Coy. will move with NOWA under its comd. Rem. Coy. in reserve.
15. A.Tk. One Tp. BOPO remains under comd. ENGA. Rem. Tp. comes under comd. NOWA on D - 2.
16. Zero. Phase I 0540 hrs. Phase II 0745 hrs.
17. D.I. notified to comds. personally.
18. Prisoners of war will be called upon to surrender, handled and searched in the manner laid down in O.O. No. 3, which now becomes a Standing Order.

#### Administration.

19. Dress. Battle order - Respirators may be worn in slung posn. and tied with the whipcord to retard movement.
20. Amn. (a) Each man will carry 100 rds. and 2 grenades.  
(b) CEHA and ENGA will each dump in their present areas a Bde. sub-reserve of S.I.A. for their own use. Vehicles will be refilled at once. A man will be left in charge of each dump.
21. Rations.  
(a) All ranks will carry an iron ration of bully beef and biscuits already issued. This will only be consumed on the orders of a Coy. comd.  
(b) On D.I. CEHA / NOWA & ENGA will have meals prepared in hot boxes by 1500 hrs. An officer from B Ech. of each unit will report to SEAR at that hour and wait information from DESMOND as to delivery of rations.
22. Water.  
(a) W.P. will remain as at present.  
(b) Water will not be delivered to fwd. units in bulk but each ration vehicle will carry a supply in 2 gal containers.
23. P.O.L. P.P. will remain as at present. A ech. vehicles will NOT carry spare petrol.
24. Sand bags. Each man will carry one under each shoulder strap if they can be procured.
25. Blankets etc. Blankets and spare gear will be dumped in present positions before fwd. moves, and left with a guard. Units will arrange for gear to be picked up by B ech.
26. Medical. A.D.S. at 43044202.  
M.b. A.D.S. at 42854233 and 42494170.
27. Burials. Div. cemetery is located at 42854135. Units must provide own digging and burial parties.

28. Prisoners (a) P.O.W. cage will be notified.  
 (b) Units are responsible for the escorting of prisoners until taken over by Pro. Coy.

Intercomm.

29. SEAR H.Q. remains present location until Comd. SEAR assumes cmd. of S.E. sector, when H.Q. will be established at Post 74.
30. Battle O.P.  
 A battle O.P. will be selected by Comd. ENGA. This will be manned by 2 men of CEHA I Sec. and one from SEAR.
31. Sig. plan.  
 W/T and L/T to each unit.  
 Wireless silence until unit moves across its S.L.
32. Liaison  
 Maj. G.E. Sell will act as L.O. with PIPO, reporting there by 1700 hrs. D - 1.  
 Unit comds. will mutually arrange for liaison.
33. Air. White crosses will be displayed by H.Q. of fwd. clys. when halted to indicate to air psh reached by fwd. tps.
34. Tac R. Sorties have been arranged for 0700, 0930 and 1200 hrs. D1.
35. In the event of postponement, the code word ABSOLOM will be signalled, followed by the number of hours by which this operation has been put off.
36. In the event of a general capitulation the code word STOP will be signalled, when all bombardment of the area inside the perimeter will stop.
37. Tanks. All captured tanks in use will fly either an Aust. ensign or a khaki flag with kangaroo painted thereon.
38. Synchronization.  
 All units under cmd. will synchronize watches with this H.Q. at 2130 hrs. D - 1.

Ack.

Signed at 19 hrs.

Method of issue -  
 Sigs.

*C. W. Brock* Major,  
 Bde. Major, SEAR.

DISTRIBUTION :

Copy No. 1	CEHA.	Copy No. 14 - 16	Geoffrey 1 - 3.
2	NOWA.	17	CARI.
3	ENGA.	18	UPOS.
4	BOPO.	19	PITH.
5	NIXE.	20	ENID.
6	Comd.	21	Geoffrey of Enid.
7	Sam.	22	File.
8	Desmond.	23 - 25	War Diary.
9	Derrick.	26 - 30	Spares.
10	Vincent.		
11	Dudley.		
12	Patrick.		
13	Keith.		

## 6 AUST DIV

Copy No. 2....

## LOCATION STATEMENT AS AT 1800 Hrs 16 Jan 41.

<u>HQ</u>	Adv HQ 6 Aust Div ("C" "A" and "Q")	TOBRUK	43364189
	Int Sec 6 Aust Div	"	"
	Det 6 Aust Div Emp Pl	"	"
	Rear HQ 6 Aust Div (ISO, Camp and Chaplains)	"	43548224
	6 Aust Div Emp Pl (less Det)	"	"
	"B" Sec FSS	"	"
<u>CAV</u>	HQ 6 Aust Cav	SIWA	
	"C" Sec Sigs - 39 LAD	"	
	"B" and "C" Sqn, HQ Sqn	"	
	"A" Sqn	TOBRUK	43534192
<u>RAA</u>	HQ RAA 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
	HQ 2/1 Fd Regt	"	42914224
	"E" Sec Sigs	"	"
	43 LAD	"	"
	1 Bty (25 pr)	"	42934231
	2 Bty (25 pr)	"	42884233
	HQ 2/2 Fd Regt	"	42874231
	"G" Sec Sigs	"	"
	40 LAD	"	"
	3 Bty (4.5 How)	"	42654231
	4 Bty (18 pr)	"	42734240
<u>RA (Attached)</u>	HQ 51 A Fd Regt RA	TOBRUK	42454165
	Sig Sec - LAD	"	"
	203 Bty (25 pr)	"	42394168
	370 Bty (25 pr)	"	42364170
	HQ 7 Med Regt RA	"	43284238
	Sig Sec - LAD	"	"
	One tp 25/26 Bty (60 pr)	"	43044228
	27/28 Bty (6" How)	"	42934215
	234 Bty (4.5" guns)	"	43314232
	HQ 104 Regt RHA	"	43054200
	Sig Sec - LAD	"	"
	339 Bty (25 pr)	"	42874197
	414 Bty (25 pr)	"	42644185
	"J" Bty 3 RHA (A Tk)	"	43204180
	"P" Bty 3 RHA (A Tk)	"	43204170
<u>RAE</u>	Adv HQ RAE 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
	Rear HQ RAE 6 Aust Div	"	43454220
	2/1 Fd Coy	"	42704100
	2/2 Fd Coy	"	44404200
	2/8 Fd Coy	"	43504210
	2/2 Fd Pk Coy	"	44404150
	42 LAD	"	"
<u>SIGS</u>	HQ Sigs 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
	18 LAD	"	"
	1 Coy	"	"
	HQ 2 Coy	"	"
	HQ 3 Coy	"	"
<u>INF</u>	HQ 16 Aust Inf Bde	TOBRUK	42284118
	"J" Sec Sigs	"	"
	45 LAD	"	"
	16 Aust A Tk Coy	"	"
	2/1 Bn	"	42154145
	2/2 Bn	"	41704130
	2/3 Bn	"	41704140

LOCATION STATEMENT AS AT 1800 Hrs 18 Jan 41.

<u>HQ</u>	Adv HQ 6 Aust Div ("e" "a" and "q")	TOBRUK	43364189 ✓
	Det "D" Sec Sigs	"	" ✓
	Int Sec 6 Aust Div	"	" ✓
	Det 6 Aust Div Emp Pl	"	" ✓
	Rear HQ 6 Aust Div (ISO and Camp)	"	43534222 ✓
	6 Aust Div Emp Pl (less Det)	"	" ✓
	"B" Sec P33	"	" ✓
<u>CAV</u>	HQ 6 Aust Cav	SIWA	
	"C" Sec Sigs - 39 LAD	"	
	"B" and "C" Sqn, HQ Sqn	"	
	"A" Sqn	TOBRUK	43534192 ✓
<u>RAA</u>	HQ RAA 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189 ✓
	HQ 2/1 Fd Regt	"	42924228 ✓
	"E" Sec Sigs	"	"
	43 LAD	"	"
	1 Bty (25 pr)	"	42774233
	2 Bty (25 pr)	"	42754239
	HQ 2/2 Fd Regt	"	43824192
	"C" Sec Sigs	"	"
	40 LAD	"	"
	3 Bty (4.5 Hows)	"	"
	4 Bty (18 pr)	"	"
<u>RA (Attached)</u>	HQ 51 A Fd Regt RA	TOBRUK	42454165
	Sig Sec - LAD	"	42394168
	203 Bty (25 pr)	"	42364176
	270 Bty (25 pr)	"	43284238
	HQ 7 Med Regt RA	"	
	Sig Sec - LAD	"	43044228
	One tp 25/26 Bty (60 pr)	"	42934215
	27/28 Bty (6" How)	"	43314232
	234 Bty (4.5" guns)	"	43054200
	HQ 104 Regt RHA	"	
	Sig Sec - LAD	"	42874197
	399 Bty (25 pr)	"	42644185
	414 Bty (25 pr)	"	43204180
	"J" Bty 3 RHA (A Tk)	"	43204170
	"P" Bty 3 RHA (A Tk)	"	
<u>RAE</u>	Adv HQ RAE 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189 ✓
	Rear HQ RAE 6 Aust Div	"	43454220
	2/1 Fd Coy	"	42704100
	2/2 Fd Coy	"	44404200
	2/8 Fd Coy	"	43504210
	2/2 Fd Pk Coy	"	44404150
	42 LAD	"	"
<u>SIGS</u>	HQ Sigs 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
	18 LAD	"	"
	No. 1 Coy (less Dets)	"	"
<u>INF</u>	HQ 16 Aust Inf Bde	TOBRUK	42284118
	"J" Sec Sigs	"	"
	45 LAD	"	"
	16 Aust A Tk Coy	"	42154145
	2/1 Bn	"	41704130
	2/2 Bn	"	41904105
	2/3 Bn	"	

CAD GOERINS  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

INF (Contd)

HQ 17 Aust Inf Bde	TOBRUK	43794220
"K" Sec Sigs	"	"
46 LAD	"	"
2/5 Bn	"	43694203
2/6 Bn	"	43984197
2/7 Bn	"	43984210
HQ 19 Aust Inf Bde	"	43374175
"L" Sec Sigs	"	"
79 LAD	"	"
2/4 Bn	"	42634240
2/8 Bn	"	42814199
2/11 Bn	"	42604153
<u>INF (Attached)</u>		
<u>I NF (MG)</u>	"	43404208 ✓
<u>AASC</u>		
HQ AASC 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43474185 ✓
Arm Coy	"	46604130 ✓
Pet Coy	"	" ✓
Syp Col	SALUM	52823688 ✓
<u>AAMC</u>		
ADMS	TOBRUK	43474185 ✓
2/1 Fd Amb	"	42504078 ✓
2/2 Fd Amb	"	43454205 ✓
2/7 Fd Amb (less one Coy)	"	43454205 ✓
One Coy 2/7 Fd Amb	"	43454205 ✓
2/1 Fd Hyg Sec	"	" ✓
<u>AAOC</u>		
DADOS and SOME	TOBRUK	43534222 ✓
2/2 A Fd Wkshop (less two rec secs)	SIL BARRANI	51803720 ✓
One Rec Sec 2/2 A Fd Wkshop	AMRIYA	" ✓
One Rec Sec 2/2 A Fd Wkshop)	TOBRUK	44204192 ✓
7 Div Sec Ord Fd Pk	SALUM	52553785 ✓
<u>PRO</u>		
6 Aust Div Pro Coy (less Dets)	TOBRUK	44404190 ✓
Det 6 Aust Div Pro Coy	CALO	" ✓
Det 6 Aust Div Pro Coy	ALEXANDRIA	" ✓
<u>Misc</u>		
6 Aust Div Postal Unit	SALUM	51723711 ✓
6 Aust Div Fd Cash Office	TOBRUK	43534222 ✓
6 Aust Div Sec Reception Camp	SALUM	51723711 ✓
6 Aust Div Salvage Unit	TOBRUK	5324158 ✓

DISTRIBUTION

16 Aust Inf Bde	1	
17 Aust Inf Bde	2	
19 Aust Inf Bde	3	
6 Aust Cav	4	
"A" Sqn 6 Aust Cav	5	6 Aust Div Salvage Unit 27
RAA 6 Aust Div	6	War Diary 28-29
RAE 6 Aust Div	7	File 30-31
Sigs 6 Aust Div	8 - 9	Spare 32-34
GOC	10	
G	11-12	<u>For Information</u>
I	13	BTE 35-36
AQ	14-15	XIII Corps 37-38
Camp	16	1 Aust Corps 39-40
AASC	17	7 Armd Div 41
ADMS	18	1 NF 42
DADOS	19	
SOME	20	
DAPM	21-23	
6 Aust Div Postal	24	
6 Aust Div Fd Cash	25	
6 Aust Div Sec Reception Camp	26	

*[Signature]*  
 Colonel,  
 G5 6 Aust Div.

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION NO.95.ADMINISTRATIVE LAYOUT - TOBRUCH AREA.

Ref. Map TOBRUCH Composite Sheet 1/100,000.

1. DIV. H.Q.

The respective functions of the various administrative echelons of Div H.Q. are as follows :-

- (a) Adv H.Q. (AA&QMG., DAAG & DAQMG)  
All AQ policy matters. All Q matters. All A matters other than those of a routine nature and legal.
- (b) Rear H.Q. (Map Ref 43544224). (Staff Learner A, L.S.O., DADOS., SOME., DAPM., Pay, Camp, Chaplains).  
All administrative matters other than those in (a) and (c)
- (c) H.Q., A.A.S.C. and A.D.M.S. (Map Ref 43464188).  
All supply and medical arrangements.

2. WATER.

- (a) A Div water point has been established at 44154178. This point will be used by all units except Pet Coy, and Amn Coy and will be kept filled by R.A.E., who will also provide technical supervision. 17 Aust Inf Bde will provide a guard of one pl on the point. This guard will provide A.A. protection and control the issue of water, which will be supplied only on the production of a written statement signed by an officer showing the strength and entitlement of the unit.
- (b) The scale of issue of water is  $\frac{1}{2}$  gal per man per day for all purposes except R.A. Units - 1 gal per gun per day. A.A.S.C. -  $\frac{1}{2}$  gal per vehicle. Demands from med units will be met.
- (c) An additional water point will be established shortly in the vicinity of 42704072. 16 Aust Inf Bde will be responsible for guarding this point.
- (d) Vehicles waiting at the water point must be widely dispersed. D.A.P.M. will provide 2 M.P. at each water point to assist in traffic control and dispersion.
- (e) For filling div water points R.A.E. will draw from cisterns at 46224138. Pet Coy and Amn Coy will also draw from this point, for which 17 Aust Inf Bde will provide a guard of one pl and D.A.P.M. two M.P. for traffic control duties.

3. SUPPLIES.

Sup points have been established as under :-

- (a) for 16 Aust Inf Bde, 2/1 Fd Coy and 2/1 Fd Amb 429412 from 1400 hrs to 1500 hrs.
- (b) for all other units - 44904146 from 1200 hrs to 1400 hrs.

4. PETROL.

A petrol point has been established at 43804156.

5. AMMUNITION.

- (a) An Amn point has been established at 43804156.
- (b) Units are reminded of the necessity of submitting the daily amn expenditure return up to 0600 hrs daily to DADOS by 1600 hrs. Arty units will also show in their return amn remaining on hand.

P.T.O.

6. MEDICAL.

M.D.S's have been established at 43134208 and 42404082.

7. SANITATION.

There has been a slight increase in diarrhoea. Units not in forward locations will construct shallow trench latrines, which must be properly attended to. Where it is not possible to construct latrines troops should be instructed to emulate the cat and bury their faeces.

8. ORDNANCE.

(a) A Rec Det Sec of 2/2 A. Fd. Wkshop is located in vicinity 44294190. All disabled vehicles which do not require a suspended tow will be brought by L.A.D's and A.A.S.C. Wkshop Secs to this Det. The location of breakdowns which require suspended tow will be notified to S.O.M.E.

(b) Indents for replacement of U.S. vehicles and weapons as well as for M.T. spares and other ordnance stores will be submitted to D.A.D.O.S. In extreme emergency a signal to D.A.D.O.S. will be taken as prior advice of an indent.

(c) An issue of underclothing will be made within a day or two to Aust units. When this issue has been made an equivalent number of dirty articles will be returned through supply channels to Aust Adv Ord Depot SALUM for laundering. Return vouchers will accompany.

(d) All units, Br as well as Aust, will submit through usual channels a return in triplicate of vehicles, excl captured ones, in their possession, including those under repair by L.A.D's, on 12 Jan. This return is to reach Div H.Q. by 15 Jan and will be in the following form :-

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>MAKE</u>	<u>NO IN POSSESSION.</u>
-------------	-------------	--------------------------

9. SALVAGE.

(a) All empty arty cartridge cases, boxes and fittings will be returned by units to Amn Point and by Amn Coy to No.11 F.S.D.  
 (b) Other salvage will be returned in empty supply vehicles to Div Salvage Dump at 45324156, where the Div Salvage Unit is located.

10. PROVOST.

(a) Convoys moving on road SALUM - TOBRUCH will not move at a greater density than 15 VTM. Load carrying vehicles will NOT over take on this road.

(b) D.A.F.M. will arrange for T.C.P. at 43964184 and for M/C patrols on road BARDIA - TOBRUCH.

(c) No traffic is to cross the landing ground in 433418.

(d) A lateral road from road BARDIA - TOBRUCH to TRIGH CAPUZZO is being constructed on the following general alignment 43484200 - 43454155 - 42854125 - 42704062.

(e) The road leading from 46214139 through GAMBUT to 45534030 is closed to all through traffic except for motor amb.

(f) No through traffic is allowed on the road leading through Div H.Q.

11. PAY.

Pay may be drawn as required from the Div Paymaster at Rear Div H.Q.

12. POSTAL.

Normal arrangements through Sup Col.

13. P.O.W.

A P.O.W. cage is established at 43974184. Pro Coy will arrange to guard prisoners and for their despatch to SALUM by returning Sup lorries.

**14. BURIALS.**

Burials will normally take place at 42854135 which will become the Div Cemetery. The site is being marked. Units are responsible for digging the necessary graves and for marking them.

**15. R.E. STORES.**

(a) A Div R.E. Stores dump is being established in the vicinity of 2/2 Fd Pk Coy at 44284162. Demands for R.E. stores will be submitted to C.R.E., NOT direct to 2/2 Fd Pk Coy.

(b) All non-expendable R.E. stores e.g. wirecutters, picks, shovels etc must be returned to the dump as soon as the work for which they are required is completed. Only in this way can a reserve of these be maintained. In this connection wire cutters and tape issued prior to the BARDIA operations are to be returned to the dump.

**16. RETURNS.**

Recent experience has shown that under the present conditions, some units fail to maintain an efficient office organization which will permit of the routine as well as special returns being submitted by the due date. It is important that the normal administrative channel be adhered to since it is only by this means that replacement of personnel and equipment can be provided for.

*C. Casey*

COL.

A.A. & Q.M.G. 6/AUST. DIV.

11 Jan 41.

<u>Distribution.</u>	<u>Copy No.</u>		<u>Copy No.</u>
A Sqn 6 Aust Cav	1	1 N.F.	53
R.A.A.	2 - 7		
R.A.E.	8 - 12	<u>For information.</u>	
Sigs	13	XIII. Corps.	54
16 Aust Inf Bde	14 - 19		
17 Aust Inf Bde	20 - 24		
19 Aust Inf Bde	25 - 29		
A.A.S.C.	30 - 33		
A.D.M.S.	34 - 38		
D.A.D.O.S.	39 - 40		
Camp	41		
D.A.P.M.	42 - 43		
Fd Cash Office	44		
Postal Unit	45		
Salvage Unit	46		
Comd	47		
G.	48		
File	49 - 50		
War Diary	51 - 52		



6 AUSTRALIAN DIV (EGYPT)COPY NO. 2.....LOCATION STATEMENT AS AT 1800 hrs 10 Jan 41.

<u>HQ</u> Adv HQ 6 Aust Div ("G" and "AQ")	TOBRUK	43364189
Det "D" Sec Sigs	"	"
Int Sec 6 Aust Div	"	"
Det 6 Aust Div Emp Pl	"	"
Rear HQ 6 Aust Div (DAAG and Camp)	SAIUM	51723711
6 Aust Div Emp Pl (less det)	"	"

CAV

HQ 6 Aust Cav	SIWA	
"C" Sec Sigs - 39 LAD	"	
"B" and "C" Sqn, det HQ Sqn	"	
"A" Sqn	TOBRUK	43534192
HQ Sqn (less Det)	MAATEN BAGUSH	

RAA

HQ RAA 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
HQ 2/1 Fd Regt	"	42914224
"B" Sec Sigs	"	"
43 IAD	"	"
1 Bty (25 pr)	"	42894224
2 Bty (25 pr)	"	42734242
HQ 2/2 Fd Regt	"	43824192
"G" Sec Sigs	"	"
40 LAD	"	"
3 Bty (4.5 Hews)	"	"
4 Bty (18 pr)	"	"

RA(attached)

HQ 51 A Fd Regt RA	TOBRUK	42304159
203 Bty (25 pr)	"	"
370 Bty (25 pr)	"	"
HQ 7 Med Regt RA	"	43284238
One tp 25/26 Bty (60 pr)	"	43044228
27/28 Bty (6" Hw)	"	43024213
234 Bty (4.5" guns)	"	43314232
HQ 104 Regt RHA	"	43054197
399 Bty (25 pr)	"	42884192
414 Bty (25 pr)	"	42584192
"J" Bty 3 RHA (A Tk)	"	43204180
"P" Bty 3 RHA (A Tk)	"	43204170

RAE

Adv HQ RAE 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
Rear HQ 6 Aust Div	"	43454220
2/1 Fd Coy	"	41704100
2/2 Fd Coy	"	42704100
2/8 Fd Coy	"	43504210
2/2 Fd Pk Coy	"	42804100
42 IAD	"	"

SIGS

HQ Sigs 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43364189
18 IAD	"	"
No.1 Coy	"	"

INF

HQ 16 Aust Inf Bde	TOBRUK	42454088
"J" Sec Sigs	"	"
45 IAD	"	"
16 Aust A Tk Coy	"	"
2/1 Bn	"	42284118
2/2 Bn	"	41934113
2/3 Bn	"	41974098

INF (contd)

HQ 17 Aust Inf Bde	TOBRUK	43794220
"K" Sec Sigs	"	"
46 LAD	"	"
2/5 Bn	"	43694203
2/6 Bn	"	43984197
2/7 Bn	"	43984210
HQ 19 Aust Inf Bde	"	43374175
"L" Sec Sigs	"	"
79 LAD	"	"
2/4 Bn	"	42634240
2/8 Bn	"	42814199
2/11 Bn	"	42604153
<u>INF (Attached)</u>		
INF (MG)	"	43404208

AASC

HQ AASC 6 Aust Div	TOBRUK	43474185
Arm Coy	"	46604130
Pet Coy	"	"
Sup Col (less det)	SALUM	52823688
No. 5 DID	IKINGI MARYUT	
No. 6 DID	QASABA	
Det Sup Col	SALUM	52533732

AAMC

ADMS	TOBRUK	43474185
2/1 Fd Amb	"	42504078
2/2 Fd Amb	"	43454205
2/7 Fd Amb (less one coy)	"	
One Coy 2/7 Fd Amb	SALUM	
2/1 CCS	SIDI BARRANI	
3 Special Dental Unit	AMIRIYA	
4 Special Dental Unit	IKINGI MARYUT	
5 Special Dental Unit	"	
2/1 Fd Hyg Sec	TOBRUK	

AAOC

DADOS and SOME	SALUM	51723711
2/2 A Fd Wkshop (less two rec secs)	SIDI BARRANI	61803720
One Rec Sec 2/2 A Fd Wkshop	AMIRIYA	
One Rec Sec 2/2 A Fd Wkshop	SALUM	52553785
7 Div Sec Ord Fd Pk	"	"

PRO

6 Aust Pro Coy (less dets)	TOBRUK	44404190
Det 6 Aust Div Pro Coy	CAIRO	
Det 6 Aust Div Pro Coy	ALEXANDRIA	

Misc

6 Aust Div Postal Unit	SALUM	51723711
6 Aust Div Fd Cash Office	"	"
6 Aust Div Reception Camp	"	"
6 Aust Div Salvage Unit	IKINGI MARYUT	

DISTRIBUTION -

16 Aust Inf Bde	1	DAPM	21-23
17 Aust Inf Bde	2	6 Aust Div Postal	24
19 Aust Inf Bde	3	6 Aust Div Fd Cash	25
6 Aust Cav	4	6 Aust Div Recept-	
"A" Sqn 6 Aust Cav	5	ion Camp	26
RAA 6 Aust Div	6	6 Aust Div Salvage	
RAE 6 Aust Div	7	Unit	27
Sigs 6 Aust Div	8 - 9	War Diary	28-29
GOC	10	File	30-31
G	11-12	Spare	32-34
I	13		
AQ	14-15	<u>For Information -</u>	
Camp	16	BPE	35-36
AASC	17	XIII Corps	37-38
ADMS	18	1 Aust Corps	39-40
DADOS	19	7 Armd Div	41
SOME	20		

*Handwritten signature*  
*Major General*  
*GS 6 Aust Div.*

*W. H. Long*

BATTLE OF BARDIA.

MAP : BARDIA SOUTH 1:25,000.

Report on Action 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

1. The Role of 17 Aust Inf Bde prior to the battle was to mislead the enemy into believing that the attack, when made, would be against his SOUTHERN sector.
2. The Role of the Bde during battle was :-
  - (a) Hold the enemy within his lines along WADI MUATERED, and, at Zero, demonstrate in this area.
  - (b) Continue the attack past CAPUZZO-BARDIA Rd with 2/6 Bn, plus B Coy 2/7 Bn forward, and A Coy 2/7 Bn in reserve.  
Objective - Rd SIDI HASEN - POST 10 inclusive.
  - (c) Reserve : 2/7 Bn, less 2 Coys in present positions.

Note : Battle names are given to various localities and others re-named. Attached sketch elucidates.  
For easier and clearer reading, Coys will be stated with name of Coy Comdr. Afterwards Coys will be known by name of Coy Comdr. Appendix I clarifies.

ROLE I.

17 Aust Inf Bde took over the sector held by 16 (British) Bde and nearly three quarters of sector held by 16 Aust Inf Bde.

The British sector was taken over by 2/6 Bn. (Lt-Col A.H.L. Godfrey MC, ED) on the night of 27/28 Dec. The line was approx 4000 yds from WADI GODFREY.

The sector held by 16 Aust Inf Bde was taken over by 2/7 Bn (Lt-Col T.G. Walker ED) on the night 28/29 Dec.

Our Fd Arty was in advance of the general line some 1500 yds and placed in an area forward of, and midway between, Bns on the line.

On the nights 28/29 to 30/31 Dec the Inf line advanced to a general line slightly ahead of Arty positions. It was barely covered by the slight reverse slope, particularly on left.

Further ground was gained by 2/6 Bn on their left flank by taking in Pts 171 and 176, so essential for Arty O.P., and the SOUTHERN end of LITTLE WADI. On the night 2/3 Jan further footing was obtained in LITTLE WADI and the SOUTH end of ROWAN WADI was occupied.

All these moves were as directed by Brig Comdg and conformed to Operation instructions or Orders through L.Os. The utmost freedom, however, was given C.Os. in working out the details and execution of these movements.

In the meantime a carefully planned scheme for patrolling was instituted and set out in Bde Operation Instructions. They set out policy and requirements, leaving full freedom for initiative to Godfrey and Walker. Both Commanders carried out excellent work in this regard. The area occupied by Godfrey was, in the main, extremely rugged, while Walker's ground was generally flat and featureless. It was of the utmost importance that Godfrey's ground should be known, as the initial Div forecast for the general attack was to be preceded by one of Godfrey's Coys attacking the enemy on the night of 31 Dec/1 Jan. This was altered in conference to Zero D1, and later abandoned on the suggestion of Brig Comdg. Godfrey's work had been done so thoroughly as to warrant this decision.

Further air photos were called for covering the S.W. corner of enemy defences and GODFREY WADI.

An outline of patrolling is as follows :-

On the night 28/29 Dec Godfrey sent out the following patrols :

- (a) Lieut W.R. Dexter D Coy through LITTLE WADI to GODFREY WADI to examine the latter and particularly the WADI rds in the vicinity of POST 11. Valuable confirmatory information was obtained.
- (b) Lieut J.B. Paterson across country to the S.E. corner of junction ROWAN and GODFREY WADIS. Enemy activity was observed and patrol moved to Pt 171 to examine suitability of that area for Arty O.P. They then proceeded to task of ambushing enemy observers as they moved out to telegraph poles on FRONTIER FENCE. Two secs were sent by one route while Paterson led the other NORTH of Pt 171. They ran into about 60/70 enemy in a quarry, whom they attacked, but the sec was forced to retire by heavy enemy fire from his rear positions. Corporal Goble was killed and 1 OR wounded. At about 0900 hrs the enemy attacked an artillery O.P. in this area and Capt. Little D Coy counter attacked with a Pl and drive off the enemy with losses. This counter attack was subjected to heavy protective shellfire, which indicated the line of, and intensity of, enemy arty protection in this area. It was of great value to Godfrey in determining his plan for the battle.

Lieut W.H. Sherlock, with a Pl, carrying two days rations, moved along the line of the coast to examine the EAST end of GODFREY WADI and the ground in that area. The going was extremely rough. Sherlock took one Sec well forward to observe by day, while the other two Secs explored and covered an area for an Arty O.P. Much valuable information was obtained, which was applied to Bde battle plan.

On the night 30/31 Dec Capt J.G. Rowan examined ROWAN WADI and moved down GODFREY WADI to vicinity of POST 11. Much enemy activity was noted, but the important information was the type of cover in and to the SOUTH of GODFREY WADI. Rowan returned overland to his Coy. The information gained and subsequently verified by other patrols clearly proved that the NORTH bank of GODFREY WADI provided the only cover for Tps. against hostile shellfire, a sample of which Little had produced.

The other patrol of importance was led by Capt R.H. Kiddle, who explored the anti-tank ditch from POST 11 NORTH past Post 13. It was wide and deep enough to be a man trap as well as a tank obstacle.

Walker patrolled vigorously the TANK OBSTACLE and the wire between it and the enemy from NORTH of BARDIA rd to POST 13 with the same results.

The enemy were extremely active after patrolling so close to his defences had been noted. His working parties were strong and our patrols were shot at on numerous occasions.

Just before dusk on 31 Dec an enemy force, estimated a Coy, came out of LITTLE WADI and moved towards the gun positions of 2/2 Fd Regt. Little had moved his Coy forward the previous night and the lack of deployment by the enemy indicated the whereabouts of this Coy was unknown. Little held his fire until leading enemy elements were at close range. Approx 17 enemy dead were left on the field and two prisoners taken.

During this period the Bn I.O. Lieut H.L.E. Dunkley was patrolling continuously. He checked and counter-checked patrol reports by the most careful and active means. Godfrey himself looked over ground by personal recce both before and during battle. Nothing was left to chance.

Godfrey and Walker had done their jobs well, and our first role was achieved. This was verified in the attack when we met with stout resistance and heavily reinforced Posts occupied by such enemy Regiments as the Frontier Regt and ex Cav fighting as machine gunners.

#### ROLE II.

The outline plan for the attack, arty fire plan and Engineer assistance were finalized at a conference about 1700 hours 31 Dec. The conference consisted of Brig Comdg 17 Aust Inf Bde, G1 6 Div, CRA and, later, CRE. Details regarding co-operation with tanks had been settled previously by Brig Comdg and Col Jerome.

Immediately following this conference, Bn Comds were given their tasks, subject to Div alterations should they be required.

Bde orders were prepared, based on the conference plan, and, as no change had been notified during the day, these orders were issued at 2000 hrs on 1 Jan.

At 2300 hrs 1 Jan Div Order arrived per L.O., calling for changes in the Operation. Further discussions and other means brought the original and altered plans into line, which was confirmed by Div Operation Instructions and instructions per Div L.O.

Bn Comds, who had been kept in the picture constantly, were given final orders in conference at 1800 hrs on 2 Jan, confirmed by Bde Operation Instructions in writing, except in the case of C.O. 2/5 Bn (Major H. Wrigley MC), whose duties prevented his arriving at Bde HQ before 2200 hrs.

The first move was that of Wrigley's Bn, from locations taken over from LEICESTER REGT to an R.V. in squares 507386, 507387 - a distance of 15 miles.

Preceded by recon of area and rds leading to it, the Bn moved at 1230 hrs 2 Jan. Tpt was provided from Bde resources and use of vehicles loaned by 2 Bn RNF. Transport troubles and road congestion retarded the approach march and tps arrived at R.V. at approx 1900 hrs.

The bivouac area selected for the night in squares 509389, 510389 was due SOUTH of Battle Assembly Area. The move to the bivouac area was further confused by tpt and guns moving into position. The Bn settled down at about midnight.

With barely more than two hours sleep the Bn moved to its Battle Assembly Area in squares 507393, 508393. They were due at 0700 hrs, after the area had been vacated by 2/3 Bn. They were in position at 0703 hours.

The next move was to the bridges and gaps in enemy line to an assembly area ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ at the WESTERN extremity of WADI SCENMAS. Wrigley crossed the bridges near Post 39 at 0800 hrs and on time. En route they were shelled with the loss of 3 casualties and 1 vehicle. The move was conducted in good order and adequate dispersion until the crossings were reached. Here there was some congestion, but was soon rectified after clearing the gap. The Bn was subject to enemy shelling while waiting in the WADI.

B Coy 2/7 Bn (Capt D.I.A. Green), to go forward and come under command of Wrigley, had moved after darkness on 2 Jan to an assembly area under cover of a slight ridge at 51043867. Their role was to take over from 16 Aust Inf Bde a frontage of approx 1000 yds on the right flank and WEST of BARDIA Rd. They were so placed as to facilitate their forward advance in the attack.

They moved forward on time, 0730 hrs 3 Jan and went through the enemy defences over crossings near POST 35. Their advance was under shellfire and they suffered casualties. On approaching their position on the Bardia Rd they came under heavy artillery fire from their left front, and M.G. fire from direction of Post 26. They were in position on time.

A Coy 2/7 Bn (Capt. J.R. Savige) also came under command of Wrigley and moved forward at 1300 hrs. It was hoped that our barrage would be sufficiently far SOUTH to obscure enemy view by the dust and smoke. The move of both B and A Coys 2/7 Bn across the front of the enemy was viewed with some apprehension. Savige was shelled during his entire advance to the crossing, but the route laid down, swinging outwards, reduced effects of enemy action. They lost one man and one vehicle. Savige was in position at 1415 hrs. His role was to move forward, ~~advance~~, and occupy ground vacated by Green, and there remain in reserve.

The narrative now places tps in position ready for the attack, SOUTHWARDS, across BARDIA Rd at 1130 hrs.

2/6 Bn had moved into position during the night 2/3 Jan. The general plan was to take advantage of the arty concentrations at Zero and to move forward to the shelter of the NORTH bank of GODFREY WADI for security against enemy defensive shellfire during the battle. This necessitated the capture of the Posts on the lip of the Wadi, but no further advance was to be made before 1130 hrs and then only if the enemy showed signs of definite collapse. 2/2 Rd Regt (Lt-Col W.E. Cremer), supported 2/6 Bn.

A contemplated further role was the mopping up of the gun positions in the S.E. of the enemy defences, but only when ordered to do so. In order to prevent enemy escaping through the rough wadi country towards the coast, one Pl (Lieut Sherlock), plus one sec H.F. Bn, covered this area and protected arty O.P. in the vicinity of Pt 65.

Adequate dispositions had been worked out by Godfrey and approved by Brig Comdg. Forward elements moved through ROWAN and LITTLE WADIS and pushed on close to the junction of each with GODFREY WADI. At 2 plus 15 C Coy (Capt. J.G. Rowan) advanced down the precipitous slopes of WADI GODFREY, just west of ROWAN WADI, and attacked the NORTHERN bank with bombs. They captured the forward edge of Post 9 in the face of stout resistance. Within a quarter of an hour 47 prisoners were taken out and approximately 25 enemy dead were left in, or in the near vicinity of this Post.

Meanwhile, B Coy (Capt. W.T. Mahlihan) had worked up ROWAN WADI in support of C Coy and attacked Post 7, where they also met severe resistance, but succeeded in capturing the Post and NORTHERN bank of the wadi. They took 40 odd prisoners and killed 1 officer and 1 O.R.

D Coy (Capt M.C.D. Little) moved along LITTLE WADI, and attacked Post 11 from its right and left flanks with two PIs. A footing was gained within the Post, but the attack failed under bombing, M.G., and small arms fire from the very strong garrison. Few survivors returned. On the capitulation of the Post on the morning 5 Jan the following enemy equipment was collected :

325 rifles	22 IMGs.
12 MMGs	6 A.Tk guns (2 pdr)
2 3-inch Mortars	

Besides these were others broken and destroyed during the action. 31 enemy dead were collected from this Post.

During this phase of fighting the outstanding feature was the heroism of the remnants of 16th and 18th PIs, who, with their retreat cut off, fought on with no thought of surrender until most had been killed or wounded. Capt R.H. Kiddle and Lieut J.S. BOWEN (D Coy) were killed and Capt M.C.D. LITTLE (O.C. D-Coy) severely wounded.

The situation was then two Coys in GODFREY WADI along a front of approx 600 yds, and in occupation of Posts 7 and part of 9. This front was occupied by MUHLHAN and ROWAN in the new re-organization. D Coy (now commanded by Lieut H.McB. Stewart) covered the left flank in the forward slopes of LITTLE WADI and A Coy (Lieut I.E. Kerr) in reserve at S1903847.

The next phase commenced with a personal recon by Godfrey at 1430 hrs, who saw that the attack from the NORTH had not gone as planned. Coys were then ordered to consolidate and hold their positions. Stewart was relieved and a defensive position on the left was taken over by Kerr.

During the afternoon and evening Muhlhan on the right repulsed four enemy counter attacks, and Rowan in the centre repulsed three enemy counter attacks. Muhlhan's right flank was forced to pull in about 200 yds, but this ground was regained on the morning of 4 Jan, during which day the position remained stationary.

During this period intensive enemy shelling was concentrated from Zero until the end of the action in varying degrees upon the area occupied. The wisdom of securing the NORTH bank was patent in the comparatively few casualties against those which must have occurred had any other position to the SOUTH been occupied.

During the morning 4 Jan counter battery fire and fire upon enemy posts within that area was undertaken by CREMOR and British Medium Regts. Post 11 was subjected to most accurate gunnery by CREMOR's Regt, who obtained numerous direct hits, but the Post replied by mortar and M.G. fire after each shoot.

At 1530 hrs a combined shoot of artillery, MMG, LAG, and A Tk guns was levelled against this Post with little effect.

The recon for a night attack met with MG fire, which convinced Godfrey that the cost of an attack would be too great. At 1130 hrs the enemy ran up the Italian flag in defiance of the attack. At 1106 hrs 5 Jan, at a time when XX attack by 19 Aust Inf Bde was progressing most favourably, 2 Carrier Secs under Lieut G.R. WARFE were sent towards Post 13 under cover to attack that Post. One carrier was destroyed by a land mine, but the Post capitulated on the approach of the carriers, followed by a dashing attack by Warfe and a few men. 70 prisoners were obtained without further casualties. The carriers then pressed home a fire attack on Post 11 from the North, and Rowan did likewise from the Wadi on the Southeast portion of the Post. Our tanks were then observed coming in from the rear and Post 11 hauled down the Italian flag and replaced it with the white flag.

Under cover of Kerr's and Rowan's Coys the garrison streamed out of the fortress and consisted of 25 officers and 350 O.Rs. As the enemy gathered around their Commander, who was wounded, with troops of the 2/6 Bn in position covering them, Godfrey advanced and shook hands with the gallant commander of the enemy force. Godfrey, in accordance with orders, then moved forward and collected the forces in the Posts on his immediate front up to the line of the road SIDI HASSAN.

The conduct of Godfrey during the battle was magnificent. He refused to be pinned down by the intensive artillery and machine gun fire. He carried out reconnaissances at great personal risk and moved amongst his troops, inspiring both subordinate leaders and men. The work of Capt J.G. ROWAN and M.C.D. LITTLE was outstanding and the leadership of junior officers up to the highest expectation. The troops stood up to the long ordeal of concentrated fire, particularly the heavy shelling, without flinching and hit

back with all their might with their weapons and used every ingenuity to gain Post 11, so vital to their protection.

The attack from the NORTH across BARDIA Rd was timed to commence at 1130 hours with the artillery fire plan operating at 1125 hours and shelling each Post in succession by observation. What "I" tanks were available were to lead each of the two attacking columns. It was believed that 3 tanks for each would be available. The rate of advance, 100 yards in 3 minutes, was regulated by the Arty plan. The indication of lifts was a heavier concentration of shelling on Posts immediately in front of the advancing Inf just prior to each lift.

Bad luck centred on this attack from its commencement. Changed plans and final teeing up gave Wrigley little opportunity to finalize his orders and pass them to subordinate Comdrs. They had a gruelling time in executing their movements, commencing 23 hours before starting off on their attack. At 1030 hours Wrigley was wounded when carrying out a reconnaissance with his Coy Comdrs. (Shortly after the attack developed the Bn I.O. (Lieut L.K. Shave) and two Coy Comdrs (Capts Green and Smith) were casualties also.) Major G.E. SELL took command after losing Wrigley and started off on another recon with Coy Commanders, except Green, who was under heavy shellfire. Sell ordered him by message to carry on as planned.

Just prior to the attack information reached Sell that tanks were NOT available. It was decided to attack without their assistance.

On receipt of information that Wrigley was a casualty, and after discussing the situation with him, Brig. Commanding sent forward Brigade Major, Major G.H. BROCK, with power to take over command should the situation warrant such action.

Sell crossed S.L. slightly behind time. As our troops moved forward to S.L., and thence onwards, they were subjected to very heavy shelling and M.G. fire.

The deployment was as follows :

Right : B Coy 2/7 Bn (Capt D.I.A. Green) leading, B Coy 2/5 Bn (Major P.D.S. Starr) echeloned to the left of, and in rear, supporting Green. Task : Capture of Posts on front edge of enemy defences from Post 27 - 26 to Posts 13 - 10 (all inclusive).

Left : D Coy 2/5 Bn (Capt C.H. Smith) leading C Coy 2/5 Bn (Capt W.B. Griffiths) echeloned to the right of, and in rear, supporting Smith. Task : Supported by "I" tanks Smith would advance to high ground TRIANGLE area and remain. "I" Tanks would then swing round, pick up Griffiths, and lead him to enemy SWITCH LINE via Posts 18 and 16; thence to mop up all Posts along Switch Line, artillery positions, and other centres of resistance to junction roads at 52083875.

At, or about Post 24, Green came under heavy artillery fire at short range from his left and MG fire from his front and left rear, but was still able to go on. Smith approached GUN GULLY near grid 392, when he came under intense shelling from guns at approx 700 yards. He pushed across and got to close range of the 12 guns firing on him, but was unable to advance further in face of this fire and the action of enemy MGs and Mortars. Griffiths, seeing the position of D Coy was precarious, came on and crossed the WADI to the right of Smith. He went forward approximately 150 yards, in two bounds, to aid Smith by fire and, if possible, movement around the enemy batteries. This was impossible on the flat ground, so Griffiths withdrew his Coy to the shelter of the WADI and covered Smith's withdrawal. At about this stage Smith, Lieut R.T. Unkles, and Bn I.O. Lieut Shave were casualties. The troops were shaken considerably and the bulk of Sell's casualties were suffered here.



With unrivalled presence of mind, and courage of the greatest audacity, Griffiths evolved a plan to work round the rear of the enemy guns and take their crews. He placed a platoon of machine gunners N.F. Bn, and a detachment of Stokes Mortars under Sgt. L. Wilson to engage the enemy battery pinning down the two forward Coys. He then contacted Bennett and, with him, discussed his plan and obtained Sgt. W.T. Morse and his Platoon. Griffiths' own men, together with Smith's, were considerably shaken and mixed owing to the hammering they had received. An enemy M.G. was firing down the bed of the Wadi, but could not reach a fair section of the EAST bank, which was defiladed by a tarn. Griffiths placed the troops under cover of this dead ground. Enemy Mortar fire was also very heavy.

Griffiths outlined his plan to Morse and then went to high ground and examined the forward area through his field glasses.

Morse collected his Platoon and, noting cover on high ground on the WEST bank, placed 1 Section, who fired into the offending battery. The next section was placed in a good position about fifty yards ahead and the other about 30 yards still further on. Morse remained with No. 1 Section, who gave cover to the deployment of Nos. 2 and 3 Sections. In the meantime, Griffiths had moved to the higher ground, still within the Wadi above where No 1 Section was placed, where he calmly surveyed the enemy positions through his glasses. Griffiths ordered Morse to place a Bren on the higher ground towards BARDIA rd. Morse suggested No. 1 Section, to which Griffiths replied - "Gun Masquash". It would not fire. After further examination Griffiths said - "If I could get someone with guts we'll go over the top at them". Morse then called out to troops in the distance - "Who'll come with me". There was no response as the din of the battle was considerable. Morse said "I'll come with you". The pair went along the upper part of the EAST bank, flat out under extremely intense fire, and reached a sangar. Griffiths produced cigarettes, which they smoked while recovering their breath after the 70/80 yard dash. Griffiths continued his reconnaissance and plan from the cover of the sangar. Here a commanding view N.W.E. to E.E. was obtained and included the bed of the WADI to the enemy hospital.

Griffiths took Morse's rifle and engaged the enemy gunners and other targets. Morse then took up the fire while Griffiths looked round. Between them they stopped the activities of the enemy, who were also subjected to our MG and Mortar fire. It appears that Corporal Shattock, with his Section, came in and helped clean up the Battery.

Griffiths and Morse then reached the Wadi bed ahead of No. 3 Section, Morse leading with his rifle. Rounding the bend of the Wadi, near the hospital, 4 or 5 enemy tanks approached, which Morse fired on. The crews put up white handkerchiefs and surrendered, leaving the engines still running. They proceeded further and, in the rear, Cpl. Shattock and his Section followed. The leading pair called on the enemy to surrender as they moved along (in Italian as instructed) and collected prisoners in small numbers. They moved past the hospital, two big tents and several big square stone huts. At this stage Griffiths called a halt stating that "if we go much bloody further we will be in Bardia". Morse, about 30 yards ahead saw a number of motor cars, which made him suspect they had reached a Headquarters. Going forward again he saw a number of telephone lines leading along the Wadi, over a small cliff to a lower level. Morse called Griffiths and stated his belief that they were about an important headquarters.

Morse opened fire over the cliff edge at some bangars, or hats, and called for surrender. A number of Italian officers streamed out, including three Colonels, with hands up. Griffiths sorted the officers from other ranks, searched the former, and sent them back under escort. Shattock and his section were on the spot and Griffiths saw the officer prisoners back and later sent for his papers as he then undertook the task allotted by the Brigade Major.

In the meantime Morse looked round and saw some heads behind a wall about 500 yards away. Taking a private with him he advanced, firing and calling for surrender. He collected approx 2000 odd prisoners. Morse shepherded them along the Wadi and came under our own Artillery fire. Keeping the prisoners on the EAST bank, Morse and his Troop moved along the WEST bank covering the prisoners. Morse sorted out an Italian Medical Officer and left the wounded with him and, as there was no farther movement to be seen, returned to his original position.

While this was on, Shattock and a few of his men moved towards the enemy O.P. and there saw two tanks approaching at a slow speed. He engaged them with his Bren and they surrendered.

Griffith's audacious move freed the whole front from fire which pinned down most of the troops and Brock's plan was put into execution. It was possible by the initiative, cool planning and able leadership of Capt. Griffiths, the courage and loyalty of Sgt Morse, the very courageous and able handling of the Mortar by Sgt Wilson, who directed his mortar fire, fully exposed in the open for 3/4 hours, and the equally courageous handling of MGs by 15 Platoon N.F., whose effort was outstandingly good.

Major Brock (B.M.) arrived at the time Griffiths was moving to his attack, and placed himself at the disposal of Sell to assist. Brock carried out a forward reconnaissance and, in view of our artillery barrage then being a considerable distance ahead, worked out a new plan. This was further essential on account of the very confused situation, which had forced the intermixing of Companies 2/5 Bn. Added to this was the problem of approx 3000 prisoners seeking shelter in the Wadi our troops occupied. Confusion was at its height.

Savige was brought forward and directed to the TRIANGLE. Griffiths collected approx 20 men and moved to TWIN WADIS. This protected the left flank. Brock intercepted two tanks which were directed to Savige to continue to fight along the SWITCH. The balance of 2/5 Bn. were re-organizing.

Green crossed the S.L. under heavy shelling and M.G. fire from direction of POST 26. Lieut S.B. Evensen became a casualty in the capture of Post 26 while leading his Platoon in its capture. The other two pls captured Posts 24 and 27, but Lieut C.A. Davis became a casualty also. After the capture of POST 24 the two tanks appeared. They were short of fuel and ammunition, but decided to carry on to their limit. Posts 22 and 25 were taken easily by the presence of the tanks, one of which lost a track. At Post 22 Lieut Webb became a casualty and Capt D.I.A. Green was shot treacherously at this Post after it had surrendered. Lieut C.W. McFarlane, the only surviving officer, took command. Posts 20 and 23 were taken, by which time the surviving tank had returned for fuel and ammunition, and the crew of the other were endeavouring to reset the track.

No friendly troops could be seen, so McFarlane sent out a patrol, which returned without sighting any of our people. A little later Starr 2/5 Bn appeared on his left rear.

The enemy were now organizing resistance in a Wadi on McFarlane's left forward flank. Starr agreed to deal with this lot, while McFarlane pushed on and took Posts 21 and 18.

From Post 18 an attack was made on Post 16, but, by sunset, the Post was not taken as the resistance was strong.

McFarlane returned to Post 18 and got two small field pieces in trim to give him artillery support on Post 16, which he proposed to attack at First Light. A conference with Starr decided details and the latter was to give support to the attack.

Lt-Col Walker was placed in command of all troops in this area by order of Brigadier Commanding, taken forward by Bde I.O. (Lieut V.J. Schofield), who returned about 1930 hrs. with a situation report. Brig Comdg, with Bde I.O., went forward as the situation had now quietened in front of 2/6 Bn.

Brig Comdg found the situation extremely confused. The attack was stagnant. Griffiths, with only 20 men, was unable to gain any contact with other of our troops and had been, and was, under heavy gun fire over open sights, M.G. and Mortar fire. He therefore wisely decided to withdraw. Sell and his Adjutant were feeling the effects of a particularly gruelling day and were unable to locate Starr. Savage was fighting guns firing over open sights and stoutly resisting machine gunners and people serving Mortars. He could be depended to hang on despite the fact he, too, had lost officers. Bennett with A Coy 2/5 Bn, was at ROAD ANGLE. The gap in the left flank was extremely dangerous.

Brig Comdg conferred with Walker and Sell and ordered the following moves.

Halliday (D Coy 2/7 Bn) to push on through McFarlane and fight his way SOUTHWARDS during the night. McFarlane was ordered to do likewise along the SWITCH LINE. Starr 2/5 Bn, who was thought to have his coy about Post 20, was ordered to occupy TWIN WADIS. A composite coy from personnel of 2/5 Bn was organized and placed under command of Capt J.W. Duffy and ordered to occupy DUMP WADI in square 517392 and send out a patrol and link up with 16 Aust Inf Bde. The area was divided into two sectors - Walker in command of forward sector, Sell in command of rear sector. Inter Bn. boundary a line from Road junction SOUTH EAST of POST 23 - Pt 148, both inclusive 2/5 Bn. Advance Bde H.Q. : Trench at approx 51553914. Staff : Brig, Bde I.O., L.O. 2/7 Bn.

The situation at dawn was as follows :

Halliday had secured POSTS 19 and 17. McFarlane moved out and, after a brisk fight, took Post 16, with one killed and 2 wounded. He then picked up a C.T. running from the East of the Post, which he took to be the SWITCH. After travelling 2000 yards they returned to a Wadi forward of POST 16 and waited for first Light. On approaching R11 they were fired on by guns over open sights at a range of approx 500 yards and M.Gs. Starr, on hearing the firing, came across and gave support by Mortar fire. McFarlane continued and captured POSTS R11 and R9, when he was brought to a halt.

Duffy had got into position in the WADI and patrolled it to a point overlooking BARDIA. He reported store dumps etc, which Griffiths had seen the previous day.

Savige was fired on by Artillery at close range as he moved to LITTLE ITALY in accordance with his orders from B.M. This fire grew in intensity and, when within 1000 yards of his objective, Artillery and MGs opened on him from his left flank. Here he lost 2 vehicles. Within 200 yards of enemy defences Lieut B.H. TIMMS was hit and subsequently died. Until then the work of TIMMS had been both daring and brilliant. Savige, continuing his course, hit the enemy on a 900 yard front and, within half an hour, he had captured 8 field pieces, some trucks and many MMGs, LMGs, and Anti Tank guns. He lost two more officers - Lieuts M.A. HOWARD and E. ARNOLD, both wounded. Savige re-organized and continued his advance down the wadi along which the enemy concentrated his fire, but it was better than taking to the open country. He cleared up one MG Post after another, captured more guns and approx 2000 prisoners. The other weapons were too numerous to count. He then checked over his men and found he had 45 left out of 96, which was pleasing enough to attempt an advance at First Light, but the enemy fire, which was exceedingly powerful, stopped them. Taking 1 Sgt and 6 men, Savige decided to look round his right flank, along which appeared to be the only hope to advance. After advancing about 400 yards they came under very close range artillery fire on their right. Four guns were captured, but the remainder made it too hot for the party of 8. Savige returned to his coy and there received orders not to advance without artillery support in daylight. He couldn't, he had been stopped. The enemy had his position taped with artillery and MG fire. Two of his own Bren gun positions were knocked out, but he suffered only one more casualty during the day.

During the fighting an Italian officer engaged Savige with his revolver. Savige returned the compliment and, firing shot for shot, both were exceedingly surprised to see the other standing when both revolvers were empty.

Savige was withdrawn approx 600 yards before First Light on 5 Jan to be clear of barrage. His orders were to assist 19 Aust Inf Bde with all fire power available, which he did.

Savige captured 16 field guns, 30/40 anti-tank guns, approx 60 MGs, 30/40 trucks, and approx 2500 prisoners. His losses were : 3 officers wounded (one DOW), 4 ORs killed and 20 ORs wounded. He was unable to evacuate his wounded until after the battle ended on account of enemy fire.

During his initial advance 2 tanks fetched up. They advanced with him for 300/400 yards and then disappeared. During that period the only enemy action was intense artillery fire. Brock has sent two tanks towards Savige, and it would appear that, in the face of heavy artillery fire at close range, they wisely moved across to Green, whom they helped.

At dawn the position, which at midnight appeared to be hopeless, was secure. Starr was the only one out of the picture. It appears that orders for his move to occupy TWIN WADIS never reached him. During the night and next day he fulfilled the role of the "Will o' the Wisp", and whenever, or wherever, fighting broke out, Starr and his Coy came in and gave support. His self adopted role was "To march to the sound of guns".

During the late afternoon of 4 Jan, and during the night, streams of prisoners had been evacuated. Four enemy Regiments had been identified, namely 115, 116, 157 & 158. That number is apart from Godfrey's action in the SOUTH.

satisfactory as the situation had developed, it still contained elements of gravity. Brig Comdg decided on two courses; firstly it was essential that he remain within the NORTHERN area to press on the fight, and secondly, it was impossible to do so and run the SOUTHERN ~~xxxxxx~~ action. He decided to hand over the responsibility of the SOUTHERN SECTOR to Godfrey entirely, a decision which Godfrey himself justified. 2/2 Fd Regt were in support.

Bde Battle Headquarters was established in GUN GULLY at 51653921. The Staff Captain, Capt. J.A. BISHOP, remained at Rear H.Q. and served Godfrey.

Counter Battery fire was arranged as follows :

2/2 Fd Regt Battery positions in squares 520387, 521387; harassing fire on Posts 4, 6, 8, 11 and 13. Counter Battery fire was arranged with FOO British 7th Medium Bde.

Tasks : Gun positions in squares 519389, 520390, and Fort 4 BARDIA, Fire by Observation on Batteries to the SOUTH EAST and EAST.

It was decided to continue the attack and capture, on the right, Posts 12, 15, 10 and 13, and, on the left, Posts R and R5. As the situation developed, Savage would advance down to road junction in square 520387. To give further protection C Coy 2/7 Bn (Lieut B de B McGeech) would occupy gun positions near road turn in squares 519389, 520389. This was subject to the result of a conference to be held at Advance Bde H.Q., attended by Walker and Sell and Artillery representatives.

The conference met at about 1100 hours and, owing to the intense Artillery concentration on HQ 2/7 Bn, a carrier was employed to procure Walker and FOO 2/1 Fd Regt.

It was revealed that the average strength of leading Coys 2/7 Bn was 35 to 40 and they were very tired as they had been fighting without respite. During the conference Lt-Col L. BARKER, C.O. 2/1 Fd Regt appeared and the artillery plan was discussed. Owing to the difficulties of communication between forward troops and guns, and the exposed nature of the ground, then being swept by artillery fire over open sights and machine guns, it was resolved to carry out the attack silently under cover of darkness. C.O. 2/1 Fd Regt was asked to hammer on Posts within that area between 1530 hrs and 1700 hrs. Defensive fire tasks required of him covered the Wadis clear of troops in squares 519390, 520390, 518391. Sell was instructed to rest A and C Coys for the night attack. In the meantime Duffy was to hold his position.

At about midday 2 carriers from Duffy's Coy went out to WADI el HOMER, in the vicinity of Pt 147, and returned with over 1500 prisoners. Later another carrier, with an Artillery FOO, found 2000 odd Italians in the same area, who surrendered to them.

At approx 1200 hrs L.O. 6 Aust Div brought orders to the effect that 2/5 Bn was to come under command 19 Aust Inf Bde at 1700 hrs. His orders also included the capture of Posts 12, 15, 10 and 13 by 17 Aust Inf Bde, but an advance further than Post R9 on the left was not to be made.

As the Commander on the spot, knowing the situation, which then was that leading Coys 2/7 Bn were under constant enemy artillery and MG fire, and would undoubtedly be physically incapable, and too low in strength to carry out the task contemplated, L.O. was asked to submit to Div the situation and that the attack would be carried out with the rested Coys 2/5 Bn unless otherwise ordered.

During the afternoon the situation remained the same and the intense shelling, Mortar and MG fire continued to be levelled on our forward troops. At approx 1600 hrs Brig Comdg 19 Aust Inf Bde called and was given dispositions, after which he outlined his plan for the attack next morning. Positions where pockets of enemy were located were pointed out, particularly the guns firing over open sights at close range, and the area where heavy MG fire was directed on our troops from positions in WADI square 519390. The ability of the gunners to stand and fight, as experienced during the battle, was pointed out as something to be noted in their advance towards the gun positions in the south east. The use of the 2/5 Bn Coys in our proposed night attack was stated to be subject to Div concurrence but, up till then, no information had been received.

At 1700 hrs Griffiths and Bennett began to move in their progress towards the attack and, at 1730 hrs, Div confirmation that 2/5 Bn was to come under orders Brig Comdg 19 Aust Inf Bde forthwith was received.

Shortly after dark L.O. 19 Aust Inf Bde arrived and pointed out the line to be occupied forthwith by 2/5 Bn, extending from road 51693904 to Wadi 51933908. L.O. was advised to inform his Brigadier that if he required a firm base to be established by 2/5 Bn from which to launch his attack, it was suggested that the furthest line that could be reached by troops with some degree of security extended from Rd junction 51793911 in a North Easterly direction. He was asked to advise his Brigadier that the Div Order had been received placing the whole of the 2/5 Bn under his command, but the 2 Coys were then moving to their allotted positions for their night attack. It was further advised that Duffy occupied the Wadi Square 517392, 517393 to cover the advance as offered to Brig Comdg 19 Aust Inf Bde. Further equivalents from 2/7 Bn, so far as was possible, were available to replace Coys 2/5 Bn, plus any assistance we were capable of giving.

The next intimation received was from Sell who advised that he had been ordered to HQ 19 Aust Inf Bde and there instructed to recall the Coys moving to their attack. Walker was then instructed to carry out the attack with his forward Right Coy, supported by his Reserve Coy.

In order to obtain the element of surprise the attack was launched at 0245 hrs on the 5 Jan and maintained until daylight. The enemy met the advance with MG fire from the attackers left rear, and MG and Mortar fire from their front. He put a protective barrage around Posts 17 and 12, which our men endeavoured to capture. Added to this was the complete exhaustion of the attacking troops, and the attack failed.

It is admitted that Brig Comdg 19 Aust Inf Bde acted within his full rights, but it is regretted that information regarding the withdrawal of Coys moving to an attack was not received earlier and by more direct methods.

Throughout the night, and up till Zero for the attack by 19 Aust Inf Bde, our forward troops were under incessant fire and, on the left, the wounded could not be removed until the battle ended. It was impossible to get food forward to them, but they carried their battle rations.

The 2/5 Bn took up the line as suggested by Brig Comdg 17 Aust Inf Bde and covered the approach march of the attacking troops.

When the barrage opened, forward elements 17 Aust Inf Bde were subjected to intensive shelling and mortar fire, supplemented by MG fire.

Orders had been issued to Walker to warn his Coys on his left flank to give the utmost assistance by fire to the advance of 19 Aust Inf Bde, which they did.

As the attack of 19 Aust Inf Bde advanced, so Walker's troops moved on to their objective down to Post 10, while Godfrey's troops moved northwards and cleaned up all Posts on their immediate front.

The action ended with our 2nd role completed.

Officers and troops behaved in a magnificent manner and moved to the attack by the utmost use of ground, correct formation and mutual fire support. Complete control was exercised by officers and NCOs. As the battle developed, so the confidence of the troops rose. With the exception of the small assistance given by the tanks the whole action was carried out by our troops, supported only by their own weapons and the clever use of ground. Complete reliance was placed upon sections and platoons giving covering fire by those about to attack and, during the hours of darkness, the technique of attack relied upon the bomb and the bayonet with successful results.

I cannot speak too highly of the leadership of Godfrey and Walker, and the universally splendid leadership of all junior commanders. It is impossible to find a relevant expression to meet the stamina, loyalty, and fighting ability of the troops themselves. This action has given them battle sense in its true meaning and they can be relied upon implicitly for future actions.

My Staff served me in a manner rarely enjoyed by a Commander. The work of my B.M. as a Staff Officer and in virtually taking command at a critical juncture was of the highest possible order. My I.O. was tireless in his efforts and was in touch with all Commanders at the most critical periods of the action. He provided for all maps, orders and important documents to be collected by Unit Sections and forwarded to Bde HQ forthwith. Among many documents etc. returned to Div was the lay-out of TOBRUK Defences in detail and the artillery fire plan; also what appeared to be a new issue of higher grade cipher. The intelligence section 2/7 Bn and one man from Bde Intelligence section manned a Post at the only point from which a survey of the battle could be obtained. Owing to the intensive shellfire personnel of 2/7 Bn "I" Sec were withdrawn by order of Brig Comdg, but the Post was maintained by the 1 man of Bde "I" Sec throughout the battle, and his was the only line which managed to keep going. He was unable to find time to sleep, but remained steadfastly at his duty. The work of my Staff Captain left nothing to be desired. Hot meals were provided for the troops each night, except in cases where it could not be brought forward on account of heavy fire. His work as Staff Officer to C.O. 2/6 Bn, when that front was handed over to the latter, was of real value. The work of my L.Os. was consistently good throughout. Communications were most difficult and over 40 miles of line were laid and maintained so far as was humanly possible. At times shellfire cut communications, but the linesmen worked to restore lines without resting and often without food. With reference to communications the utmost difficulty was experienced in regard to wireless, which was constantly jammed by the enemy and at times out of range. The work of my office staff was of equal calibre with that of the other services, all of whom served to their utmost. My T.O. and Sup Q fulfilled every requirement and demand. My LAD Commander and his staff worked unceasingly in keeping vehicles on the road and repairing those out of action.

Casualties were as follow :

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Killed</u>		<u>Wounded</u>		<u>Missing</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Officers</u>	<u>ORs</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>ORs</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>ORs</u>	
2/5 Bn	1	17	6	45		1	70
2/6 Bn	2	20	2	49			73
2/7 Bn	2	13	6	55			76
Bde HQ		1		2			3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>151</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>222</b>

<u>SUMMARY :</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	5 killed	14 wounded	
	<u>O.Rs.</u>	51 killed	151 wounded	1 missing
	<u>TOTALS</u>	56 killed	165 wounded	1 missing

I feel that the success of the Operation was due to the outstanding work and loyal co-operation of the following officers. This does not lack a true appreciation of the work of many leaders and admits that, in battle, outstanding work of many individuals is overlooked.

Lt-Col A.H.L. GODFREY : For his outstanding work in handling the situation on GODFREY WADI. I was able to hand over complete control of this sector to Godfrey without further cares.

Lt-Col T.G. WALKER : Without whose clear appreciation, drive, and untiring efforts the situation on the night of 3/4 Jan would not have been saved.

Major G.H. BROOK : For his masterly handling of the situation and his re-organization of a confused situation into a comparatively smoothly working battle on afternoon of 3 Jan.

Major H.C.D. MARSHALL : Without whose devotion to duty and untiring efforts Walker's programme for night of 3/4 Jan could not have been accomplished.

Capt. W.B. GRIFFITHS : Whose clear brain, courage and skill saved the battle on 3 Jan.

Capt. J. G. ROWAN : Without whose assistance Godfrey would not have been so completely successful.

The outstanding Lessons of the Battle are :-

1. Enemy fire : His shells are poor in quality. As the battle progressed so our troops developed a wholesome contempt for them. Fighting previous to the battle had created an impression that they were not much use. His MG fire was good, but not well-directed. His Anti-tank weapons were good, and his Mortars were the most effective and best used weapon. His grenades were ineffective, unless direct hits were obtained. He had stocks of well-made Molotov bombs and used one against our troops attacking Post 11.
2. Defences : His forward defences were good and shell-proof. Practically every Post was wired and had a Tank obstacle. All had Anti-Tank guns or Light Artillery pieces, MMG, LMG and Mortars. His forward troops fought well until our troops were inside the wire enclosing the Posts. He then surrendered. Posts were manned with never less than 70 men, and up to nearly 400.
3. Use of Artillery : Some of his guns were in positions not previously known by us. In other cases he brought them forward to crest lines. He fired over open sights at close range on a great number of occasions. The crews fought well until they were caught in rear or flank, when they surrendered.
4. Supports and Reserves : His close supports appeared to be on a line with our left flank and generally mobile. When the guns fought, and particularly after the long halt, some infantry stood up to it. Generally they surrendered when our troops appeared.



His reserves were on a line WADI HELGH el HOMER and the forward WADI MEREIGLIA. Large numbers of prisoners were collected here on two occasions and most had their bags packed ready to be picked up by any of our troops who would act as guides to safety.

Our experience confirms :

1. Our troops can hold ground against his heaviest artillery concentration, providing there is a little cover.
2. His forward troops and gunners will fight until our infantry have the upper hand.
3. His guns are well used, and are adept at sweeping flanks over open sights.
4. One tank, or anything that looks like a tank, will compel surrender on its near approach.
5. His anti-tank gun and field guns are effective Anti-tank weapons.
6. Tanks, followed by infantry to mop up with weapons available to hit his anti-tank weapons and thus protect our tanks, will make the going easy; i.e. Light Field Pieces used as for contact battle.
7. Any rolling up of forward edge of defences must take in the line of his forward guns and thus protect the exposed flank.
8. Infantry, supported by their own weapons, can take his positions at night and, with some cover and mutual fire support, can do so by day, but the process is slow.

I cannot end my report without recording the magnificent work of the machine gunners of the 1 NF and the personnel of "J" Battery RHA. They fought to their utmost and used their weapons to the greatest possible advantage in assisting the forward moves of troops. The Australian soldier in this Brigade has developed a high regard for the calibre of the British Tommy and his leader.

The support afforded by the Artillery, and the 2/2 Fd Regt in particular, was of a high order, particularly in the action on the Southern flank covered by the 2/2 Fd Regt, whose gunnery was most accurate and consistently good.

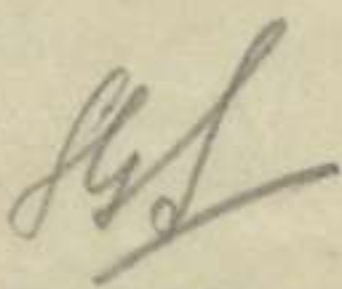
The work of the Field Ambulances met every requirement, and the efforts of Regimental Chaplains and our Salvation Army Official, Major Palmer, in providing hot drinks for the wounded at RAPs and ADS put the wounded in better heart and form than they would otherwise have been.

All our dead have been buried in one cemetery. The enemy dead were buried in the field, and their graves marked.

Arms of all descriptions have been accumulated in dumps throughout the area.

Finally, the behaviour of the troops in the face of quantities of liquor found in enemy positions was exemplary. In some cases quantities of liquor were destroyed to avert any trouble.

Recommendations for Awards have been passed separately.

  
Brig.,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

APPENDIX I.

List of Coys and Names of Coy Comdrs.

2/5 Bn

A Coy	Capt A.P. BENNETT.
B Coy	Major P.D.S. STARR.
C Coy	Capt W.B. GRIFFITHS.
D Coy	Capt C.H. SMITH (wounded early afternoon 3 Jan), succeeded by (temporary measure) Lieut J. McHALLY. Coy taken over late afternoon of 3rd by Capt J.W. DUFFY, who commanded then on.

2/6 Bn

A Coy	Lieut I.E. KERR.
B Coy	Capt W.T. MURLHAN.
C Coy	Capt J.G. ROWAN.
D Coy	Capt M.C.D. LITTLE (wounded) and all other officers casualties, succeeded by C.S.M. COWIE J.M. Replaced by Lieut H. McB. STEWART.

2/7 Bn

A Coy	Capt J.R. SAVIGE.
B Coy	Capt D.I.A. GREEN (Killed), succeeded by Lieut C.W. McFARLANE.
C Coy	Lieut B. de B. McGEACH.
D Coy	Capt G.H. HALLIDAY.

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17 Aust Inf Bde O.O. No. 1.

Ref MAPS. SALUM ↓  
SALUM (CYRENAICA) | 1:100,000.  
BARDIA ↓ "

1. INFORMATION.

(a) Enemy disposed as on "I" map green overprint.  
(b) 2/6 Bn occupying Right Bn Sector, 2/7 Bn 1000x SW of CAPUZZO. 2/5 Bn at BAGGUSH, 2 Leicesters in reserve area SALUM. 16 Aust Inf Bde on our left flank.

2. INTENTION.

2/7 Bn will take over from 2/2 Bn and right fwd coy of 2/3 Bn on night 28/29 Dec. 40.

3. METHOD.

Boundaries.  
Inter Bde (incl 17 Bde) PT 177 at X-tracks 51375907 - PT 195 on road at 50993836.  
Inter Bn. (incl 2/6 Bn) grid 517.  
2/7 Bn will relieve 2/2 Bn and right fwd Coy 2/3 Bn during night 29/30 Dec. Relief will commence in daylight where possible.

4. M.G.

One coy 1 N.F. under comd 2/6 Bn.  
One coy 1 N.F. under comd 2/7 Bn when relief complete.  
One coy 1 N.F. in reserve sighted to cover gap between 2/6 and 2/7 Bns and to cover gaps on left front of 2/7 Bn.

5. ARTY.

2/1 Fd Regt in support 17 Aust Inf Bde.

6. LIAISON.

2/1 Fd Regt will arrange for a L.O. with each of 2/6 Bn and 2/7 Bn during hours of darkness.

7. DEFENSIVE FIRE.

Only BN Comds are authorized to call for D.F. at present. Rate : 5 r.p.g.p.m. for 5 minutes.

8. LIGHTS.

No lights will be shown between 1730 hrs and 0645 hrs daily.

9. ADMIN.

As in Div Instr No 90.

10. INTERCOMM.

Bde HQ at CISTERNs 51683776.

11.

Signal Plan L/T to each Bn.  
W/T listening set with each Bn.  
Wireless silence will hold.

Ack.

Time of Signature 1456 hrs.

Method of Issue by Sigs.

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

DISTRIBUTION:

2/6 Bn	Copy No 1	I.O.	Copy No 9	2/1 Fd Regt	Copy 17
2/7 Bn	2	S.O.	10	2/2 Fd Regt	18
2 Leicesters	3	Sup O.	11	2/5 Bn	19
1 NF (MG) Bn.	4	T.O.	12	6 Aust Div	20
'J' Bty RHA	5	O.M.E.	13	16 Aust Inf Bde	21
Comd	6	L.O. 1	14	File	22
B.M.	7	L.O. 2	15	War Diary	23
S.C.	8	L.O. 3	16		24

Operation Instruction No. 1.

Dear Col. Godfrey,

Div instructions call for action by your Bn as follows :

Night 28/29

- (1) You will secure and hold ground in the vicinity of Pt 125 in square 525386 to cover O.P. area Pt 65 in same square.

I concur with your plan covering strength and movement of party, and objective.

The primary role will be to take up a position in the area : N.W. bank of BIR-er-RAMLA and high ground Pt 125 of sufficient frontage and necessary strength to hold the area.

The secondary role will be to examine VADI el MUATERED on EASTERN extremity. You will NOT commit the party to any undue risk in loss of personnel or the hindering of its primary role in carrying out the secondary role.

- (2) You will examine the area Pt 171 in square 520384. Your primary role will be to secure the vital ground in this area and occupy it. You will subsequently prepare to occupy this area with a Coy.

The secondary role will be to ambush observers on the telegraph poles and examine the WESTERN portion of VADI EL MUATERED. Any action in carrying out the secondary role will NOT prejudice the primary role.

From night 28/29 to night 29/30.

You will arrange to reconnoitre the area of enemy post No 9" - 51983862, and obtain information covering the following:

- (i) The possibility of occupying the bend, as shown in air photo, approx 52023863 by a platoon to provide covering fire.
- (ii) The practicability of gaining an entrance at :-
- (a) the passage S.W. of Post 9" as shown on air photo.
- (b) the passage across the Tank obstacle WEST of Post 9" as shown on air photo and where road crosses the obstacle.
- (iii) The wire in the vicinity of (i) and (ii) above, particularly in the WADIS near the S.W. passage to POST 9.
- (iv) The location of POST 7.
- (v) Is the shadow marking on air photo in the vicinity of POST 7 a small ridge.
- (vi) The practicability of an attack on Post 9" from the vicinity of bend in WADI at approx 5202 3863.

- (3) The general patrolling of VADI el MUATERED other than the above, and as outlined in your proposals will be carried out as far as possible.

Distribution :

Copy No. 1 Lt-Col Godfrey MC, ED.  
2 Comd.  
3 File.  
4-5 War Diary.

Brig.,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

Ref. Maps : BARDIA NORTH |  
BARDIA SOUTH | 1:50,000  
Green Overprint.

S E C R E T.

30 Dec. 40.

Operation Instruction No. 2.

Dear Col. Godfrey,

The following tasks will be carried out today and tonight as applicable.

- (1) Complete occupation of fwd Coy positions in localities selected by you within the general area laid down. In avoiding skylines, fwd slopes and awkward ground, Platoons may be distributed in separate areas. You are free to use your discretion in making any reasonable alterations which daylight discloses should be made. It is important that moves should be completed tonight.
- (2) Continue patrolling, especially in the "WESTERN" corner area and in other points of WADI which previous patrolling warrants. Col Walker has placed an O.P. fwd for today to watch enemy activity and habits around Post 9!! The high ground in Walker's area should facilitate.
- (3) In view of a report that enemy AFVs moved out from N.W. corner of perimeter yesterday, ensure your protection by anti-tank guns under comd.
- (4) Warn Coys that there may be instances of hoisting the white flag before any operations take place. If so, prisoners are to be encouraged to come across.
- (5) Should an opportunity present itself to clean up any pocket of enemy, do so at your discretion, providing risks leading to undue casualties are NOT taken. This will aid subsequent events.
- (6) Warn tps it is known that the enemy are laying "booby" traps. This applies to wine, beer, etc particularly. Officers and NCOs are to be instructed to maintain control of tps and prevent their wandering should the situation tend that way. There will NOT be any uncontrolled movement of tps in any circumstances.

Brig.,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

Distribution :

Lt-Col Godfrey MC, ED.  
Comd.  
File.  
War Diary (2)

Ref. Maps : BARDIA NORTH |  
BARDIA SOUTH | 1 : 50,000  
Green Overprint.

SECRET.

30 Dec. 40.

Operation Instruction No. 3.

Dear Col Walker,

The following tasks will be carried out today and tonight as applicable.

- (1) Complete occupation of fwd Coy positions in localities selected by you within the general area laid down. In avoiding skylines, fwd slopes and awkward ground, Platoons may be distributed in separate areas. You are free to use your discretion in making any reasonable alterations which daylight may disclose should be made. It is important that moves should be completed tonight.
- (2) Carry out patrolling task tonight on main BARDIA Rd which was postponed. Initiate any further patrolling you deem necessary, but advise Bde HQ early to avoid a clash with right Bn.
- (3) In view of a report that enemy AFVs moved out from N.W. corner of perimeter yesterday, ensure your protection by anti-tank guns under comd.
- (4) Warn Coys that there may be instances of hoisting the white flag before any operations take place. If so, prisoners are to be encouraged to come across.
- (5) Should an opportunity present itself to clean up any pocket of enemy, do so at your discretion, providing risks leading to undue casualties are NOT taken. This will aid subsequent events.
- (6) Warn tps it is known that the enemy are laying "booby" traps. This applies to wine, beer, etc. particularly. Officers and NCOs are to be instructed to maintain control of tps and prevent their wandering should the situation tend that way. There will NOT be any uncontrolled movement of tps in any circumstances.

Brig.,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

Distribution :

Lt-Col T.G. Walker E.D.  
Comd.  
File.  
War Diary (2).

17 Aust. Inf. Bde. O.O. No. 2.

Ref. Maps : BARDIA Green Overprint.

INFORMATION:

1. (a) Enemy as in Din. Int. Summary No. 4.
- (b) 16 Bde supported by Tanks and Engineers will attack enemy posn and gain entrance between Posts 47-49. Attack will then turn right and roll up enemy positions to RD BARDIA. 16 Bde will then occupy def. line along rd BARDIA and high ground facing BARDIA. Following this phase 17 Bde will continue attack South rd BARDIA.  
R.N. will bombard North Sector prior to and on D.1.  
R.A.F. will bomb vital areas prior to and during attack and drop leaflets calling on garrison to surrender.  
Armd. Div. will prevent enemy escaping to N. and N.W.  
All Div. arty. and attached Regts will support attack.

INTENTION:

2. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde. will co-operate in the capture of BARDIA.

METHOD:

3. Troops to carry out attack.  
17 Aust. Inf. Bde.  
2/2 Fd. Regt.  
1 N.F. (M.G.) Bn.  
'J' Bty R.H.A.  
1 sub Sec Engs.
4. Action of each Bn is set out in appendices A, B, and C.
5. M.M.G. One Coy under comd each Bn.  
One Coy in mobile reserve vicinity BDE HQ.
6. Arty. Fire plan as effecting each Bn is shown in appendices.
7. A.Tk. One Tp 'J' Bty under comd, each Bn.  
PL 17 Aust. A Tk Coy under comd 2/5 Bn. O.C. Tp of 'J' Bty, with 2/5 Bn will comd PL 17 Aust. A.Tk Coy also.
8. Zero. Div. attack zero 0530 hrs on D.1. (D.1. advised personally to Unit Comds.)

ADMINISTRATION:

9. See Appendices.

INTERCOMMUNICATION:

10. Bde HQ. Present location.
11. O.P. A battle O.P. will be established by 2/7 Bn manned by 'I' Sec 2/7 Bn and one man Bde 'I' NSec. 'K' Sec Sigs will lay direct line from Bde HQ to this O.P.
12. Air. Each fwd Coy HQ will carry two strips of white calico 8' x 1'6". These will be laid out in the form of a cross to indicate position to Tac R and Arty R aeroplanes. To be shown only when halted after forward move commences or when called for by Tac R or Arty R sorties. Tac R sorties at 0700, 0950, and 1200 hrs on D.1 over BARDIA perimeter.
13. Liaison. Capt. R. H. Kiddle, 2/6 Bn. will act as L.O. to 16 Aust. Inf. Bde.
14. Code Names. The following code names will be used for comds on R/T and in texts of

## of messages only:-

Comd. 6 Aust. Div.	MAC
16 Aust. Inf. Bde.	TUBBY
17 Aust. Inf. Bde.	SAVAGE
19 Aust. Inf. Bde.	BOB
16 Inf. Bde.	BILL.

15. In the event of a general capitulation of the garrison of BARDIA, the code word STOP will be signalled. On receipt of this code word all bombardment of the area inside the BARDIA perimeter will stop.
16. All ranks will be acquainted with the Italian phrases as under:-
- |                   |   |   |              |
|-------------------|---|---|--------------|
| 'HANDS UP'        | - | - | MANI IN ALTO |
| 'OPEN YOUR HANDS' | + | - | APRI LI MANI |
17. No souveniring or looting of any description can be tolerated. Strict control must be maintained at all times as individuals straying from their secs may be shot. All ranks will be warned against booby traps.
18. In the event of the operation having to be postponed, the code word CEASE will be signalled.
19. Tank Flags Signals.
- |                                  |   |   |                                     |
|----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| (a) Red, White and Blue Flags    | - | - | friendly tank coming out of action. |
| (b) Green and White Flags.       | - | - | Come on Infantry.                   |
| (c) Red and Yellow Flags.        | - | - | Tank broken down.                   |
| (d) Blue square Flag.            | - | - | Bn Comd. Tank.                      |
| (e) Red Flag and Red Pennant.    | - | - | Adjts Tank.                         |
| (f) 2 Yellow Pennants.           | - | - | Sqn. Command.                       |
| (g) 1 Pennant, (various colours) | - | - | Tp. Comd.                           |
20. Infantry Signals to Tanks.
- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| (a) Tin hat on Bayonet.   | - | - | Infantry wants help.                       |
| (b) Two or more tin hats on bayonets, pointed towards objectives.           | - | - | Indicates point or linear target.          |
| (c) Individual placing himself in front of tank with hand to side of mouth. | - | - | Indicates speech with tank Comd. required. |
21. Watches will synchronised with Bde HQ at 2200 hrs on D.1.

Ack.

Signed at 1345 hrs.

Issued by L.O. &amp; Sigs.

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

DISTRIBUTION:

Copy No. 1	2/5 Bn.	Copy No. 17	T.O.
2	2/6 Bn.	18	O.M.E.
3	2/7 Bn.	19	Aust. Inf. Bde.
4	2/2 Fd. Regt.	20	B.O. 7 R.T.R.
5	'J' Bty R.H.A.	21	6 Aust. Div.
6	1 N.F. (MG) Bn.	22	L.O. Div.
7	R.A.E. 6 Aust. Div.	23	19 Aust. Inf. Bde.
8	Comd.	24	Lt-Col Cunningham 2/1 Fd Amb.
9	B.M.	25	File.
10	S.C.	26	)
11	I.O.	27	) War Diary.
12	Sig. O.	28	)
13	Sup. O.	29	)
14	L.O. 1.	30	) Spares.
15	L.O. 2.		
16	L.O. 3.		



## APPENDIX A.

Issued with 17 Aust. Inf. Bde. O.O. No. 2 dated 1 Jan.

Method. 2/6 Bn group.

Comd. Lt-Col. A. H. L. Godfrey M.C., E.D. - 2/6 Bn.

Troops. 2/6 Bn.

One Coy 1 N.F.

One Tp 'J' Bty R.H.A.

One sub sec Eng will report on D.1.

Roles. (1) To examine GAP vicinity Post 11 for mines.  
Other tasks as required.

(2) One PL B Coy with one Sec MMG to remain on right flank area.  
CARRIER WADI one Sec to protect Arty O.P., rem. of Pl and  
sec MMG to be in posn to prevent enemy movement down coastline.

(3) Occupy WADI EL MUATRED from Post 3 to Post 11 following lift of  
Arty from fwd posts at Z plus 15.

~~\*\*\*~~ Dispositions.

Two Coys fwd. Remainder less platoon on role (2) in ROWAN and  
LITTLE WADIS.

Bn HQ in LITTLE WADI.

Success signal RED-GREEN-RED-GREEN.

(4) Further roles may be ordered as follows. :-

(a) Advance to line of rd SIDI HASSEN from Post 3 to Post 10.  
Should the general situation develop sufficiently satisfactorily  
and there appears little likelihood of casualties, this action  
may be taken independently but not before 1130 hrs. D.1.  
Success signal as for (3).

(b) Mop up guns vicinity of coast between MARSALA EL RAMIA and  
BIR TUTUFAHIM.

No independent move will be made north of rd SIDI HASSEN without  
orders, nor any mopping up of guns without reference Bde. HQ.

Arty. Programme this area. Concentrations as follows. :-

Z - Z plus 5 on posts 7, 9, 11, 13  
Z plus 5 - Z plus 10 on posts 4, 6, 8, 10.  
Z plus 10 - Z plus 15 on posts 7, 9, 11, 13.  
Z plus 50 - Z plus 60 two Regt bursts on gun posns 52103875.  
Z plus 120 - Z plus 150 two Regt bursts on gun posns 52103875.  
Z plus 180 - Z plus 360 observed fire.

Just prior to each lift the concentrations will be intensified.

APPENDIX B.

Issued with 17 Aust Inf Bde C.O. No 2 dated 1 Jan.

Method.

- |    |               |  |         |
|----|---------------|--|---------|
| 1. | <u>Comd.</u>  | Maj H. Wrigley MC  | 2/5 Bn. |
| 2. | <u>Troops</u> | 2/5 Bn.<br>'B' Coy 2/7 Bn.<br>one coy 1 NF.<br>one Tp 'J' bty RHA.<br>Pl 17 Aust A Tk Coy. |         |

3. Phase I.
- (a) Approach march. 2/5 Bn group will move on D - 1 from present locations to rear assembly area - square 505386. No movement North of NW - SE rd before 1900 hrs.
- (b) After 1900 hrs 2/5 Bn will move fwd to second assembly area in square 507390.
- Note.
- (c) 2/5 Bn will move fwd not before 0545 hrs D1 to fwd assembly area in square 508393 on EAST side of rd to be in this posn by 0700 hrs.  
Note. Recce and piquet route before move.
- (d) Begin crossing bridges placed by Engs over A Tk ditch North of POST 39 at 0800 hrs.  
Note. Route and positions of two bridges to be recce before move.
- (e) Occupy assembly area in cover of WADI SCEMMAS from S in SCEMMAS to its western extremity.
- (f) B Coy 2/7 Bn will cross bridges over A Tk ditch South of POST 35 at 0935 hrs when they come under comd C.O. 2/5 Bn. They will occupy at once Right sector of line rd BARDIA from Pt 167 at 51553905 to rd junc at 51563912.

4. Phase II.
- (a) 2/5 Bn will continue advance from S.L. - rd BARDIA crossing this rd at 1130 hrs (i.e. Z plus 360).
- (b) They will be preceded by tanks and will advance on two coy front.
- (c) Right coy down front edge of enemy defences.
- (d) Left coy directed on to high ground in rd triangle at 51863905.
- (e) Rear coys generally follow fwd coys.
- (f) Objective - POST 19 at 51793887 - rd at Pt 149 at 51853902 - rd junc at 51863907.  
Right Coy will occupy high ground within triangle rds area 51863905 and observe to their front and left flank.
- (g) Rate of advance 100 yards in 3 minutes.

5. Arty

- (a) Preliminary bombardment -

Z plus 26	- Z plus 34	on post 26
Z " 34	- Z " 42	" " 27
Z " 42	- Z " 48	" " 24 and 25
Z " 60	- Z " 120	(Two Regt bursts on Posts 24 and 25 Two Regt bursts on Posts 26 and 27)
Z " 150	- Z " 180	Two Regt bursts on Posts 25 and 22
Z " 180	- Z " 360	observed fire.

- (b) Supporting fire concentrations as follows :-

Z plus 360	-Z plus 381	on Post 25
Z " 360	-Z " 372	" " 24
Z " 381	-Z " 399	" " 22
Z " 395	-Z " 405	" Wire Triangle at 51753906.
Z " 399	-Z " 417	" Post 20.

2.

Z plus	381	-	Z plus	405	on Post	23.
Z "	405	-	Z "	426	" "	21.
Z "	426	-	Z "	451	" "	19.
Z "	426	-	Z "	441	" "	18.
Z "	451	-	onwards		" "	17.
Z "	441	-	"		" "	16.
Z "	445	-	"		" "	14.

Arty will indicate lift from each target by added intensive fire on each just before completion.

6. Exploitation.

C.O. will be prepared to exploit with res Coys :

- (a) Line of POSTS R11 - R5 inclusive in squares 519389 and 520388.
- (b) Line of WADI from 51866395 - 52043904 and work down re-entrants to shoot up gun crews to the South.

The method and order of these tasks will be determined by Tanks available and morale of enemy.

7. Success Signal, when objective gained : Two greens.

APPENDIX C.

Issued with 17 Aust Inf Bde O.O. No 2 dated 1 Jan.

Method.

1. Comd. Lt-Col T. G. Walker ED 2/7 Bn.
2. Troops 2/7 Bn (less B Coy).  
One Coy 1 NF  
One Tp "J" Bty RHA.
3. Detachment.  
C.O. 2/7 Bn will detail B Coy to come under comd  
C.O. 2/5 Bn at 0935 hrs D1.  
C.O. 2/7 Bn will select an assembly area to the  
left flank of B Coy present posn under cover from enemy view  
and arrange for B Coy to move there on D - 1. No movement  
before 1815 hrs.  
They will disperse and dig slit trenches with "A"  
echelon vehicles dispersed at intervals of 300 yds.  
B Coy will move fwd on D1 and cross bridges  
laid over A Tk trench by Engs South of POST 35 at 0935 hrs and  
then come under comd 2/5 Bn.  
O.C. B Coy will be responsible to recce the  
safest possible route to bridge.  
B Coy will take over fwd posn on line of Rd  
BARDIA from Pt 167 at 51553905 to rd junc at 51563912 and there  
remain pending further orders.
4. Carriers. C.O. 2/7 Bn will make available to C.O. 2/2 Fd  
Regt one carrier if required by him.
5. Role. 2/7 Bn group will be Bde reserve and will remain  
in present locations.

APPENDIX "D".Administrative.

Issued with 17 Aust Inf Bde O.O. No 2 dated 1 Jan  
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- Rations. (a) All ranks will carry an iron ration consisting of 1 tin of preserved meat and 2 pkts of biscuits.  
 This will only be consumed on the orders of Coy Comdrs.  
 B Ech and ration points will remain at present locations until the issue of the battle is decided. A meal will be prepared at present cooking points ready to be carried forward.
- (b) Supply Point will remain at present location until further orders, and units of 17 Aust Inf Bde will send guides to Supply Point. Attached units will continue to draw from Supply Column.
- (c) An issue of rum will be made to units on 2 Jan. The Brigade Commander desires this to be issued at the discretion of Bn Comds.

- Medical. (a) M.D.S. 51603747.  
 A.D.S's to be established by 0400 hrs D-1 day.  
 50453900 - 2/1 Fd Amb  
 50853850 - 2/1 Fd Amb  
 51903792 - 2/2 Fd Amb
- (b) ADS at 51903792 will move under orders 17 Aust Inf Bde and that at 50453900 under orders 16 Aust Inf Bde.
- (c) Walking wounded will be instructed to make for -  
 (1) BOUNDARY WIRE.  
 (2) CROSSROADS 51373907.  
 (3) STONEWALL outside enemy wire on ROAD CAPUZZO-BARDIA 51553899.  
 (4) Walking wounded of 2/5 Bn and B Coy 2/7 Bn who become casualties before crossing the S.L. will move to the opening in the wire through which the attack was launched between POSTS 47 and 49 and there seek directions.
- (d) Cemetery at 51853750.

- Ammunition. (a) A Bde reserve will be established at rear of 2/7 Bn H.Q. 51463847 on D - 1 day.  
 All units will dump a reserve and refill vehicles. 2/7 Bn will detail one NCO to control dumping and remain in charge. During battle units will draw direct from dump or A.P.
- (b) A.P. will be established as under by Z plus 120 on D1 day -  
 50483873  
 51403800
- (c) 2/5 and 2/6 Bns will ensure that sufficient grenades are on hand to issue two to each man.  
 2 additional bandoliers will be carried by each man. Ammunition from wounded will be collected. Full scale plus all available additional wire cutters will be carried.
- P.O.L. (a) A Ech vehicles will NOT repeat NOT carry spare petrol - tanks will be filled on the evening of D - 1 day.
- (b) Petrol Point at 51733734 at 1400 hrs daily.

- Water W.Ps. will remain at present locations.  
 Water in enemy localities will not be used until examined by a Medical Officer and marked as fit for consumption.

Appendix "D"  
(contd).

Prisoners.

(a) Units are responsible for escorting prisoners direct to P.O.W. cage at 51703770. It will be ensured that troops are warned not to fire on the enemy if he has offered to surrender.

Parties surrendering will be kept covered by L.M.Gs. at a reasonable distance to ensure that they cannot rush whilst they throw down their arms. They will be kept covered until parties have gone forward to search for concealed weapons.

Transport.

A Ech will move with units.

Dress.

Battle Order, Greatecoats and Groundsheets.

Code for use LIAISON OFFICERS.

1. CEHA ON No. 2 Assembly area . . . . . HOME
2. CEHA on Adv Assembly Area within Perimeter . . . . . SHANTY
3. CEHA deployed and waiting Zero . . . . . SCATTER
4. Crossed start line (add Bn code name) . . . . . MOVE
5. Bn held up at (ref letter code) add Bn code name. . . . . BLOCK
6. Right coy held up at ( do ) " " " " . . . . . RIGHT
7. Left " " " " " " " " . . . . . LEFT
8. by Inf in position at (give map ref code) . . . . . FOOT
9. by M.G. fire " " " " " " . . . . . RATTLE
10. By Arty " " " " " " . . . . . BOOM
11. By TANKS " " " " " " . . . . . TRACKS
12. Firing from (add map ref code) . . . . . ORIGIN
13. Tanks seen at ( do ) . . . . . CRAWL
14. Objective gained (add unit code name) . . . . . HURRAH
15. Moving off to exploit ( do ) . . . . . CHASE
- ~~kfx~~ For CEHA (a) Right Flank :- Enemy positions along  
Perimeter . . . . . DOOR  
" " (b) Central : Enemy posns line of wire. CENTRE  
(c) Left Flank : Along Wadi to guns . . . . . CREEK
16. Exploitation objectives gained - . . . . . TIGER  
(For (a) (b) (c) above add which ones).
17. Estimated casualties (Add Bn code name & give figures  
in code) . . . . . WEARY
18. Estimated prisoners (figures added) . . . . . DAGO
19. We want (a) Water . . . . . DEW  
(b) Rations . . . . . TUCKER  
(c) Petrol . . . . . GAS  
(d) S.A.A. . . . . . BRASS  
(e) Grenades . . . . . KNOBS  
(f) Mortar . . . . . BARREL  
(g) Anti Tank Rifle . . . . . CLIP  
(h) Anti Tank guns. . . . . SQUEAK  
(i) Sttetcher bearers . . . . . ROSE
- Note: Give unit code names and map ref in code in each  
instance.
20. My Headquarters are at (add ref in code) . . . . . HEAD
21. Arty FOO with me . . . . . ARTHUR
22. Arty FOO gone . . . . . DEPART
23. I have insufficient artillery support . . . . . NIX  
(give unit code name and map ref in code).

2 Jan. 41.

Op Instr No 4.COs All Bns.2/5 Bn.

- (a) "B" Coy 2/7 Bn will follow the tanks in their attack along front edge of perimeter.  
Objective Post 19 with exploitation to Post 15.
- (b) Zero hr arty 1125 hrs.  
Tanks followed by troops 1130 hrs.
- (c) FOO 6" Bty will report to you on ground.
- (d) A Coy 2/7 Bn will move into the perimeter and occupy posn vacated by "B" at 1400 hrs. No fwd move from assembly posn before 1300 hrs.

Role - reserve Coy.

(e) Exploitation. The signal to commence expl tasks will be arty lift, which at Post R11 will be 1315 hrs.

(f) Consolidation will be along the line of Western rd.

- (i) Right Coy will cover Pt 152 and R5. Coys in succession to the left will cover.
- (ii) Pt 145.
- (iii) The Triangle.
- (iv) Pt 152 - Pt 153 in square 517391.
- (v) Pt 156 - A in SCMMAS in square 516392.

6 Aust Cav will rally between 156 and 164 sq 516392 and move out to refuel. C.O. will see they are relieved and the gap between 2/5 and 16 Bde is covered.

(g) Engineers - Two sub-secs 2/1 Fd Coy will move with "B" Coy 2/7 Bn to Post 15 to clear mines. Then report to 2/6 Bn to clear mines from crossings near Post 11.

2/6 Bn.

(1) B Coy 2/7 Bn, under command Major Wrigley MC, will continue the advance from the NORTH, supported by tanks, and will halt at POST 15. TANKS will continue to cross Rds at 51883869 and return to an area NORTH of Rd BARDIA to refuel.

Further movement of 2/5 Bn Troops will NOT be SOUTH of Rd SIDI HASSEN.

(2) 2/6 Bn Role will be -

- (a) At Zero a demonstration by fire will be made, but an attack will NOT be launched on WADI MUATERED.
- (b) ROMAN and LITTLE WADIS will be cleared of enemy.
- (c) As situation warrants the NORTH BANK of WADI MUATERED will be gained. There is NOT a time limit to gain this objective and C.O. 2/6 Bn will use his discretion as to its accomplishment.
- (d) Movement NORTH of main WADI will NOT be made until the TANKS reach POST 10.

(3) Batteries in square 521367 will be bombed up to and at 1130 hrs.

(4) Consolidation tasks will embrace the covering of MAIN WADI, EAST of and including POST 5, Rd Junction in square 520387, and at POST 10.

(5) Prisoners. C.O. 2/6 Bn will make preparations to handle large numbers of prisoners.

(6) Engineers. After B Coy 2/7 Bn reaches Post 15, a party of Engrs will report to 2/6 Bn to clear mines from crossings near Post 15. They have been instructed to report to nearest officer 2/6 Bn and then to get on with their task.



2/7 Bn.

(1) The move of B Coy will be in accordance with orders already issued.

(2) A Coy will take over role of B Coy on Rd BARDIA at 1400 hrs.  
NO movement fwd from assembly area before 1300 hrs.

Distribution :Brig.,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

Lt-Col A.H.L. Godfrey MC, ED.  
 Lt-Col T.G. Walker ED.  
 Major H. Wrigley MC.  
 File.  
 War Diary (2).  
 Sparcs (2).

19 Bde at Buna

The Bde commenced taking over the line on the night of 27/28 Dec. ~~and by the~~ <sup>By</sup> the night of 2/3 Jan we had edged forward to within a hundred yds or so of the enemy defences. Patrols had been active in seeking information & delousing mines and several engagements were fought which gave us the first prisoners captured by Australians in the war. We had ~~actually~~ thus fulfilled our prior role of misleading the enemy to a belief that the attack would come from our area of concern, we had drawn up ~~the~~ never or eight Regiments, each of four Bns.

Our role in the battle was to continue this deception ~~and at the same time to fight with the rest of the Bde 10000 yds by the action of one Bn; while the rest of the Bde attacked, at a point 10000 yds to the North, <sup>they would</sup> ~~had~~ advanced South towards the first Bn who would rope in the enemy prisoners. The starting point for these operations was the line held which covered 16000 yds. The 2/6 ~~in position~~ moved along the rough Waces <sup>in a line of darkness to</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>demonstrate</sup>~~

2 on the 3 Jan  
against the enemy at dawn. Their  
role was to gain close contact. open  
them down on their front. which  
they soon did. The enemy resorted  
immediately with protective  
artillery fire which was main-  
tained, in the greatest intensity,  
~~for~~ until the morning of  
the third day of battle. Post  
11, garrisoned by selected <sup>the 8th</sup>  
enemy troops, ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> fire while, from  
~~other~~ <sup>other</sup> areas, seven counter  
attacks were launched &  
repelled. The sixth added  
undying lustre to the already  
illustrious record of that regiment  
by its action ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup>  
Bardia. which was of the greatest  
importance to the general  
operation. Their steadiness under  
intense shell fire, their attacks  
under machine gun fire &  
the final capture of Post 11  
have never been surpassed.

The 8/5 plus <sup>2 Coy 2/7</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>over</sup> the  
were destined ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> the advance  
from the North. The fifth  
commenced to move ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup>  
midday on the 2nd & the Coy <sup>3rd</sup>  
of the 7th at dawn on the ~~3rd~~.  
They were to take up the  
pursuing upon the Bardia  
had where ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~Bardia~~ <sup>Bardia</sup> finished

to Southern more. After a most trying night the fifth were in position in time ready to attack when the C. O. was wounded. Worse still ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> ~~did not~~ <sup>did not</sup> ~~as expected~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>zero</sup> hour ~~the~~ <sup>at</sup> advance started, on a front of <sup>approximately</sup> 2500 yds. They were met by <sup>unlocated</sup> field guns firing over their heads, & machine gun & mortar fire of great intensity. The packing fire of the guns to their left flank brought the fifth to a standstill while the Coy of the Seventh further right advanced with great difficulty. An officer of the fifth gathered a <sup>force</sup> of <sup>men</sup> by an incredible movement, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> captured ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> captured 40 guns and over 2000 prisoners. The advance then continued but our baggage had been lost; so it was a case of fighting <sup>supported by</sup> ~~with~~ our own weapons only.

We were then moving against the enemy strength we had previously drawn into the pocket of a depth of 1000 yds. by ~~our previous~~ <sup>our previous</sup> efforts. They fought with guns blazing over open

Regts + shot up on troops with  
machine guns <sup>& mortars</sup> from ~~unlocated~~  
~~positions~~, which slowed up the  
advance. Touch between  
Cops was impossible as  
each turned to fight the  
newly disclosed enemy  
elements. By nightfall  
the advance ~~was~~ were  
3000 yds ~~along the~~ out.  
~~and had~~ They had their  
captured over 5000 prisoners,  
~~and~~ about 60 guns, besides  
anti tank guns, machine  
guns & mortars. but the  
situation was terribly confused.

The Seventh had brought  
their last Cops into the  
battle late in the afternoon.  
Fortunately two were available  
to keep the fight going  
while the Cops engaged  
were reorganized, and  
dangerous gaps in the flank  
filled.

Our losses in officers  
had been heavy. Two had  
been ~~treacherly~~ shot after  
enemy elements had surrendered.  
At 9 o'clock, <sup>that night</sup> the situation was  
a nightmare but not incapable  
of solution.

Two days of the seventh fought forward another 1500 yards in darkness and the fifth covered the flank & supported the first 7th.

Day broke with the situation secure & fighting still going on. The work during the night was by bomb & bayonet and the exploits of the troops, mostly led by young subalterns, was magnificent. Control, ~~correct~~ movement & mutual fire support were applied more correctly than ever on an exercise, which was the chief factor to success. By dawn 12 enemy guns had been accounted for and further guns etc. were taken. ~~During~~

During the second day ~~patrol~~ ~~can~~ patrol of one or two carriers roped in more prisoners. The Infantry added to the further total of over 6000. Under cover of night further advances were made by

The depleted Corp against  
 the enemy who fought in  
 his posts until a way  
 had been cut through his  
 wire. In each post was  
 a garrison never less than  
 70 and at Post 11 approx  
 400. In some places  
 the fighting was so intense  
 that we were unable to  
 get our wounded out until  
 the battle ended, but  
 the Jps still pressed on

which was their only salvation  
 to secure the ground more advances were made against  
 them on the head day

every  
 Reserve  
 on our  
 flank  
 These  
 columns  
 drove  
 us the  
 bulk  
 of the  
 Division

found us still fighting  
 under intense artillery  
 mortar fire. ~~but~~ <sup>when</sup> another  
 Bde ~~was~~ advanced on  
 our left & created a  
 threat to the enemy that  
 eased the situation.  
 Our Jps, weary beyond  
 words, pressed forward  
 captured Post 11 and soon  
 cleaned up the balance  
 on our front. The role  
~~was~~ thus fulfilled in  
 its entirety but only by  
 by the superb fighting qualities  
 of our Jps. Superior magnificently

by Victorian gunners, particularly  
by the counter-battery work  
on the southern edge & fire  
on the enemy positions in that  
vicinity.



# Battle of Tobruk

The battle of Tobruk will go down in history as one in which fighting was the exception. It would appear that the enemy ~~required~~ <sup>considered</sup> the slaying of an attack to be sufficient to vindicate his ~~to~~ surrender with ~~honour~~ honor.

As at Beleda 17 Bde were denied any opportunity for spectacular results but had ample opportunity for work of real value.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Bn were selected to assist the brigade responsible for the breakthrough. They covered a distance of 23 miles to enter the perimeter and led the attack in a central position.

Merely one post. The  
 enemy fought but he  
 soon stopped that business.  
 They continued on to  
 the head of the Wadi leading  
 to the sea which was the  
 result of their exploitation.

The role of the 7<sup>th</sup>  
 was to enter the perimeter  
 & relieve another Bn  
 as early as possible  
 and then exploit to a  
 line abreast the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Prior to his task, and  
 before zero, the 5<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> ~~was~~  
 demoralized by fire against  
 the enemy right flank  
 to draw his attention from  
 the main point of entry.  
 They both did a good job.

It was felt that the  
 7<sup>th</sup> may have difficulty  
 in crossing the minefield  
 and Anti Tank ditch which  
 would probably not be bridged  
 as they arrived. During the

3  
hours of darkness on the ~~20th~~<sup>21st</sup>  
Special patrols deloused  
the mine field. To facilitate  
the crossing of the Anti-Tank  
ditch ladders, picks & ~~the~~  
shovels were carried. ~~The~~  
7<sup>th</sup> arrived on time & soon  
completed the relief and  
explosion without a  
casualty.

The ~~5th~~<sup>5th</sup>, who had been  
brought to a hardy posture  
during the night, advanced  
to the trenches when  
explosion was complete.

They advanced some three  
miles under shell fire  
with perfect steadiness.  
During the march ~~the~~  
~~troops~~ a <sup>new</sup> change of route  
forced a <sup>new</sup> change of direction.  
They owing <sup>change</sup> found it  
moved on as if on parade.

Previous study inspired  
probable work, which was  
supplemented by early  
recurrence. This permitted

The 7th to ~~but~~ release the  
6th and was then sent  
to their line. They also  
provided fighting patrols  
to clean up the Wades  
at first light.

An enemy Fort. armed  
with Naval guns had  
caused us some bother  
so it was determined to  
capture it - <sup>at first light of 22 Jan</sup> A Coy of  
6th Bn, supported by a  
Bty of arch, advanced  
over 3000 yds ~~to~~ to  
deploy for attack. The  
enemy saw the move &  
surrendered. Over 400  
prisoners, ~~the~~ four 6 inch  
& six 3" naval guns was  
the prize.

The 5th who had helped  
another Bde on the 21st  
were now back and  
continued the advance to  
the limit within our area.

The 6th were now  
keeping the other Bde ~~and~~  
marching on Tobruk.

5  
they captured important territory  
without loss. They +

~~marched 22 miles~~ marched  
~~23 miles on the 21st and~~  
another  
16 miles on the 22 Jan.

The 5th cleaned up  
all enemy elements in  
the vicinity by midday on  
the 22nd ~~was~~ Our front  
was thus clear of enemy  
& we had gained ground  
not contemplated at the  
commencement of the action.  
We had secured the flank  
protection for the base  
designed to march on  
Toluck. Thus a  
reasonably good job was  
completed. ~~Approx~~ <sup>over</sup> 3000  
prisoners were taken & many  
guns, H.Q. etc ~~and~~  
were part of the bag.

1 Jan 41 Great activity at HQ today. Preps  
the projected offensive well on the way and  
O. NO 2 issued. After being sent out to all  
units per liaison offer and D.R. An amendment  
was received from D.W. This was promptly attended  
to, but halfway through the <sup>amendment</sup> order was cancelled. (0800 hrs)  
Word was sent to units of the base & attached units,  
of a conference to be held in the morning at 15th D.R.

2 Jan 41 Preparations for the forthcoming battle of Bardia proceeding apace. Last minute ~~rush~~ rush for equipment which up till now had not been forthcoming. Cpt Patena (O.M.E.) rushed to Cairo to pick up motor parts. Still a shortage of vital equipment right up to the last minute

Tonight the O.C. for the Battle of Bardia was issued and 5 & 6 BNS were the lucky ones to take a part in the first phase with 2/7 BN less 1 Coy in reserve.

Late tonight, wire-cutters and gloves arrived at HQ from Djibouti - possibly the motto is better late than never. The night was taken up with notifications of alterations to the O.C.'s from Djibouti

3 Jan 41 (Friday)

At 0530 hrs this morning the Battle of Bardia commenced with an intensive artillery barrage, naval units co-operating and then a forward move by the 5 Tanks. The Engineers performed a miracle in bridging the a/t ditch to enable them to pass. The infantry of our brigade moved into position and attacked on time. 2/6 BN through their previously exerting pressure on the enemy found themselves solidly opposed and unable to move. 'D' Coy 2/6 BN were caught in a dead-end wall and were unable to move.

However 2/5 BN, in the afternoon, broke enemy resistance and crashed through, great heroism being displayed by the men. Some thousands of prisoners were captured and 2/7 BN who were also thrown into the fray also captured many prisoners.

2/5 BN were unfortunate in losing their command early in the battle. B.M. of Aust Coy Bde moved forward to assist the re-organisation of the bn and generally directed forward operations. Nightfall came with the faces well into the defences, with the exception of the 2/6 BN who were still doing a fine job keeping a large force occupied on the southern sector.

Early this morning, actually whilst the battle was on base plates and mortars arrived for the use of the battalions. A huge cake but they were successfully distributed.

Casualties on the first day of the first battle included a number of officers and as a whole this brigade fared worse than the rest. This can be understood when our battalions were outnumbered 10 to 1.

Reservist and S.P. arrangements worked well & no fatal occurred in the supply system.

Saturday 4 Jan 41. Today the 6 BN were still to hold the enemy in the southern sector a task which they performed admirably



Saturday 21 Jan 41 contd

5 BN continued to press forward, together with the 7 BN. More prisoners were taken but every resistance in this sector had stiffened, quite understandable as their 4 creek regts were situated in this sector. Artillery support was necessarily restricted as troops from both sides were somewhat intermingled. Heavy artillery was particularly accurate and stuck to their tasks strongly. It was found <sup>that</sup> many gun positions were operating ~~at~~ which were uncharted previously. These guns operated on our troops over open regts and advancing in the face of such fire was an epic.

Mortars played an extensive part in the silencing of these batteries.

The day finished with our troops further forward and the result very clear.

In the next morning the Brig, R.M. + T.O went forward and established an ~~at~~ adv HQ which was used to direct operations.

Sunday 5 Jan 41 The 19 Bde were deputed to finish the task today and, as before, an intense artillery barrage preceded the attack by I tanks and infantry. The tanks and infantry pushed forward and quickly wopped up all the enemy resistance.

Post 11 which had been such a trial to the 2/6 Bn was surrounded by the 2/6 and finally surrendered. This marked the end of organized enemy resistance and for the rest of the day after 1220 hrs (approx) cleaning out of enemy pockets continued. It was an extraordinary spectacle to see long lines of thousands of prisoners marching along to the collecting points. Still more extraordinary was to see the places from which they had been taken. It was a defenders paradise. Equipment (and) ammunition & food was left in confusion over the whole area.

The victory was a great one and the example set by our brigadier was also a great one.

All officers did fine jobs showing battle-sense and courage, leading their men forward with no thought of danger to themselves.

The first touch of the enemy air force came today when enemy bombers & fighters came over and dropped a number of bombs. However the R.A.F. had done a wonderful job in restricting the enemy to such a small effort.


The defenses of BARDIA are to the WEST of the town, and then turn EAST to junction with the sea. About a third of the way from the Southern edge the CAPUZZO-BARDIA road intersects the defenses. Within this southern area my Victorian Brigade operated. The role of the Brigade prior to battle was to conduct such action to mislead the enemy into a belief that the main entry into the defenses would be from the south west, instead of, in reality, the western side of his northern sector. On the day of the battle one of my battalions was to hold the enemy on his southern defenses, while another battalion, supported by the third one as necessary, would enter the enemy defenses north of the Bardia road, cross it, and attack towards the south. The primary role was achieved by several minor fights and much patrolling activity on our part. In fact the garrison in the southern sector was considerably augmented and held by his best troops.

My troops attacking from the north commenced moving into position at midday prior to the day of attack and had little more than two hours sleep while carrying out this long and somewhat complicated move. They entered the enemy position on time and there awaited tanks which were refueling and refilling with ammunition. Unfortunately, their Commanding Officer was a casualty before their advance started and they moved across their Start Line unsupported by tanks which had been turned to another important task. As the leading Coy. Comdr. said: "The tanks were not there but nevertheless we decided to advance". The left leading Company soon ran into a mass of unlocated guns, which they tackled and eventually captured - 40 in all. The right leading Coy. were caught in flank by these guns and were pinned until their capture. The advance continued with our units tackling each post, a veritable fortress, supported by their own weapons only. Later on, two tanks arrived and the going was easier in capturing three posts. Unfortunately one tank was knocked out and the other ran out of ammunition. The fight continued, by the infantry employing perfect tactics and posts one by one cleaned up. One young officer in his report stated that after having bombed the garrison and entering through the wire which he had cut found the enemy underground and somewhat sulky; a couple of bombs had the persuasive effect of bringing them to light.

Night fell in close grips with the enemy who fought well while holding their post. Battle confusion was at its height but fortunately two Coys. were attacked and we pushed forward to continue the fight throughout the night while the intermingled Coys. were straightened out and placed into position. Dawn broke with our advance troops well along the line of their objective. Something like 6000 prisoners and 100 guns, apart from machine guns, anti-tank guns etc. were in our possession, and 12 Battalions had been identified. The enemy had strengthened his front during the night and our troops were swept by machine gun fire and artillery firing over open sights, as well as mortar bombs and grenades flying everywhere. Despite this, further ground was gained and seven or eight thousand more prisoners collected. The Battalion on the southern defence had been by no means idle. At Zero they moved along the wadis, rushed the forward positions and were the first Australians within the enemy lines, from where they handed back over one hundred prisoners. Immediately the attack commenced the enemy artillery threw the whole of its weight into this area and continued with varying intensity throughout the battle. All the officers of one Company were casualties and the troops under intense pressure by the enemy by fire and counter attack hit back with all their might. Post No. 11 may be handed down in history connected with this battle. It was a second MOQUET FARM and contained a garrison of approximately 400 men under a gallant commander, who ran up the Italian flag in defiance. Our men entered Post 11 and withered under the hail of fire, but kept it pinned by their own activities. In this area the troops endured shelling almost as intensive as THE SCORCE without flinching. Daylight broke with the enemy active and aggressive, but they had had a very disturbed night through our forward movements and pressure continually <sup>exerted</sup> ~~exerted~~ upon them. Fresh troops, supported by tanks, attacked on our left and all our units, knowing what was happening, moved forward in unison and completed their task. The ~~flag~~ <sup>flag</sup> at Post 11 was hauled down and the white flag replaced the Italian national flag. The Commander, who had been wounded, led his men out and our Battalion Commander moved forward and shook him by the hand. Thus the battle ended with the troops of opposing forces standing around watching two gallant gentlemen shake hands

after a very vertly fight.

Brig.,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.  
8 Jan. 41.



Monday 6 Jan 41 The calm after the storm.  
No noise, no movement until late and the  
pleasure of relaxation was soothing to the nerve.  
Later in the day the job of cleaning up was  
started. This was done more in the word than the  
act as everybody was more interested in pulling the  
place to pieces. However, such materials as  
would breed disease were quickly burned

Tuesday 7 Jan 41 Another day of rest, everyone  
relaxing and recuperating. The process of  
reorganization proceeded apace, and vehicles of one  
were pressed into our service. With time  
to look around we found tremendous amount  
of equipment and maps. Private documents  
were found to be strewn everywhere & practically  
no attempt had been made to destroy documents  
of informative ~~cl~~ type.

Wednesday 8 Jan '41 General cleaning up continued and most of the men took the opportunity to have a look at the surrounding country. All continue to marvel at the equipment left behind by the enemy. They were certainly equipped on a lavish scale and the loss has been tremendous. Most of us are now awaiting the further forward move.

Thursday 9 Jan '41 News that our bde would move up tonight.

The I.O. and B.M. moved forward to reconnoitre new positions for the bde.

All packed and ready to move, the head of the convoy passed the start line at 1730 hrs.

Made good time and took up dispersed positions at the new site. No hitch occurred in the movement.

Bde HQ was located at 43794220 (TOBRUCH 1.100,000)

All into bed and listened to the bombers.

Friday 10 Jan '41 Today the Brig and B.M. visited Dis. CO's of units fed on reconnaissance of 19 Bde positions.

The Brig and I.O. went on a recon of defensive positions along the lines of a large wadi on the 430 grid.

10 Jan 41 contd.

The enemy dropped large numbers of thermos bombs throughout the area last night, and today much noise has been made blowing them up. Enemy air activity is noticeably small and (~~and~~) it is known that many aircraft have been destroyed on the ground. This is, at least, saving us trouble.

Everybody settling into the new positions, plenty of digging being the order of the day.

Weather here is very pleasant and locality quite pleasant.

Saturday

11 Jan Brig busy checking over recommendations.

B.M. on recce. CO's 5/6/7 Bns on recce of unit areas in 16 & 19 Bde (~~and~~) to check positions for the relief of one or other if needed.

B.M. went to Div today and learned further details of movements to come.

Major Campbell 2/5 BN temporary commander came today and had a chat with the Brigadier to clear up some points.

A windy day today - reminding us somewhat of the weather we suffered in Egypt.

Mail today only a little but welcome nevertheless.

This H.Q. recommenced its news summary today. It helps to keep the Bde in touch with outside events.

12 Jan 41 Sunday. Brig busy with report of  
Bde action at BARDIA.

A fairly quiet day at this HQ, everyone being able  
to relax more and pay attention to the brother units  
now manning the line.

Capt McLean left today to become a staff liaison  
at Division. Leaves a bit of a hole in the rear  
as he was a bright spark.

Lieut Tyrell A.S.C. reported for duty as supply  
officer and impressed with his generalship.

Prisoners are still coming in in dribs and  
drabs, 4/5 BN collecting 5 today. They certainly  
got close to their objective in getting 12 miles from  
TOBRUK. They did, however, appear to be glad  
to be finished and their effort had only been  
inspired through fear instilled into them by  
senior officers.

13 Jan 41 Monday Brig lunched at Division  
today, during which it was stated that as far  
as Division was concerned 17 Bde was never in the  
Battle of BARDIA!

At conference later the contemplated attack on  
TOBRUK was discussed. I.O. S.C. recommended  
for proposed defensive scheme.



Tuesday 14 Jan 41 Brig visited all BN commands  
and put them in the picture as far as he was able  
Message received from Div - we are to  
relieve 19 Bde on the night of 15-16 Jan. We  
relieve their 3 BNS fwd with two BNS + 2/5 on  
~~left~~ right, 2/7 on left + 2/6 BN reserve  
B.M. issued warning order & then visited  
19 Bde to check disposition, discuss details of  
change over.

fresh lamb (goat) and meat sauce for dinner  
tonight - Almost unbelievable out here in the  
sand and stone of Libya. Lamb was acquired by  
T.O. using Italian money on the innocent Libyans  
The last few days have been red-letter days  
for the men as gazelle has been the main food  
on the menu. - This gazelle hunting had  
somewhat untoward results as one of our beach  
patrols was pinned to the ground by sundry  
stray bullets.!!

Wednesday 15 Jan '41

A very dusty day for the 17 Bde movement into the fray. One of the worst days we've had for dust.

The battalion dispositions were as follows. 2/7 relieving the left bn and one coy, 2/5 bn relieving the right bn and one coy.

2 of our battalions relieving 3 bns forward of the 19<sup>th</sup> Bde.

2/6 BN remain in reserve, see of instr.

Thursday 16 Jan '41

<sup>M.G. Bn</sup> Chesters, moved in relieving RN 7. under Cornia this Bde. I.O. called this A.C. for usual information regarding dispositions etc.

Another incident with 19 Bde - Tried to have their almost unserviceable <sup>Cable</sup> replaced by the 1st. Was a small incident which caused murmuring in the hearts of the Mighty! at Div.

Friday 17 Jan 1941

Trig called at Div for conference and preliminary discussions for capture of TOBRUK.

87 km finally pinpointed positions which were found to be approx 1000 yds in rear of positions given by 19 Bde. Artillery survey assisted in this respect.

Saturday 18 Jan 41

Major Wills G.S.O. III (I) Corps called and lunched with Hughes. Discussed Intelligence problems and looked over Section at work.

Cel. Gernon <sup>(81st Fa. Regt)</sup> moved in and is quartered with his staff with our Staff Officers. Div O.P. Order received our O.O. No. 5 prepared taken to Division read and initialed by G.I. and approved. Signed at 110 hrs and forwarded to Commanders by M.R.

Terrific haze of dust and wind.

Sunday 19 January 1941.

Col. Walker 87 Bn

Col. Godfrey 86 Bn

Col. Waite Chestines

Maj. Eden P. Bty

Maj. Travers 88 Fd. Coy.

Brig. Moreshead 18 Bde with his B/Major

The above mentioned officers called and had conversation with Brig. concerning the forthcoming action at TOBRUK.

Monday 20 Jan 1941

Brig. attended conference at Div in morning.

General Mackay on Brig at our headquarters.

During afternoon Conference of all C.O.s and Commanders of the attached units at H.Q.

Maj. Turner arrived to act as 40 between this Brigade and 6 Div.

Day of great activity for the Brigade staff ensuring that everything was as nearly perfect as could be for the activities in the morning.

A fairly heavy gun on the coast helped to remind us that there was a war on by dropping a good big shell on the road about 800<sup>x</sup> from H.Q. every ~~few~~ now & then.

Tuesday 21 Jan 1941

Battle of Tobruk

There was not much room for doubt that ~~Sgt~~ Lt had arrived.

The various Artillery batteries attached to us woke us up in no uncertain fashion - subsequent events proved beyond doubt that the awakening was little to the liking of the enemy.

The action went almost better than "according to plan" the only small slip up being that the Italian flares refused duty for Capt. Potter.

The 76th was under Command 16th Bde for the initial phase.

At about 0830 hrs we had news that 87 Bn were following the 81 Bn through wire at post 65. From that stage the 87 pressed forward along wire cleaning up the posts as they passed. The only enemy resistance of any moment was artillery fire from Coastal batteries and WADI LEITON. The flow of prisoners was well under way. 87 relieved 81 on Bardia roadway and exploited forward as far as eastern edge of Wadi at 1125. Brig and skeleton staff following receipt of news that 87 had taken over from 81 moved forward to post 75 to establish advanced H.Q. (1. Mine-up broke down + then fat loss en route) 86 Bn on reaching objective (being WADI DELIA) reverted Command 17th Bde and 85 Bn less Coy came forward and passed to Command 19th Bde. Throughout the entire action to this stage the Italians had shown

very little fight and just after  
cross on the route had been  
fallen with very little action.  
Consequently our casualties  
were remarkably small. As at  
BARRIA the Station Artillery  
were the only arm to present any  
resistance and show any  
"fight" at all. It was most  
unfortunate when a 6" Coastal  
Battery shell landed in their area  
after resistance had been quashed  
and one Offr (Lieutenant) and 6 others  
were wounded.

Remainder of Bde H.Q. moved  
forward and arrived Post 75 at about  
1830 hrs.

Conference of C.O.s was held  
at Bde H.Q. at about 2000 hrs when  
plans for following action  
as were discussed and roles  
allotted.

We had the greatest difficulty  
in persuading 6 Aust Div to lay their  
line to us. General Mackay and Col  
Varey called to see King in afternoon

In the morning of this  
rather eventful day a message  
late so far was received advising  
that Maj King was promoted Lt Col.  
and appointed O.C. 85 Bn.

Wednesday 22 Jan 1941

By 0245 hrs 86 Bn had been relieved by 87 Bn. 86 Bn less C Coy after having a role allotted by this Bde were placed under Comd 19 Bde who as usual appear to need 4 Bns per Bde.

We awoke in our underground position in Post 75 and looked out on what was, considering we were in the middle of a battle, a remarkably quiet scene. C Coy 86 whose job was to capture hostile batteries on the coast in Sq. 419450 pushed on with the work and carried out the task without firing a shot. The host on the seafront yielded 250/400 prisoners and captured arms included 6 3" naval guns & 6" naval guns & Breda MAF guns & Breda Mts. As the host was immensely strong and built of concrete the success was a first rate achievement. Unfortunately the garrison in the host destroyed instruments ~~and~~ maps and documents before surrender. News of the success of C Coy was received by Bde H.Q. at 1313 hrs.

The task of 87 Bn was to clear out enemy posts in WADI ZEITON and WADI DELIA and generally to mop up that area. To assist in this section of the job and also to help the Coy of 86 Bn in their efforts an early morning barrage was provided by our good friends the 88 Fd Regt.

Wednesday 22 Jan 1941. (Contd).

Practically no opposition was met by the 47 who reported at 1500 hrs that WADI LEITUN was cleared of enemy. At 1418 6 Div advised that 19 Bde had entered TOBRUCH.

Following receipt of news of capture of the Town of TOBRUCH, acting in accordance with the orders of the G.O.C., the Brig allocated areas running to the beach south east of TOBRUCH to ~~set~~ the various units and attached troops to enable them to bivouac thus giving an opportunity for the men to have a clean up and gear etc to be checked before we continue to press towards the Atlantic.

At 1600 hrs we moved Bde H.Q. to position in WADI DELIA. The Italians had evidently intended to stay in the WADI and the Brigade Officers and other personnel were quite soon in the most comfortable quarters which we had seen since leaving KINGI.

Thursday 23 Jan 1941

At. 42124248

Bde H.Q. at rest. B/M very off colour and something of an invalid for the day. Day devoted to cleaning up and re-organisation of sections.

Brig guests of 6 Div. for dinner to say farewell to Col. Berryman as G.I.



Saturday 25 January 1941  
Story of move:—

Friday. 24 Jan. 1941

Second rest day. B.M. feeling much better. B.I.O. visited Div and <sup>from C.I.R.E.</sup> obtained some sensitised paper which should assist his section quite a lot.

B.M. and Lt Col. went over to have a look at Lt Col. in their spacious quarters overlooking the Mediterranean. Maj Smith of advanced operating section ex Lt Col. denied and spent night in camp.

Saturday 25 Jan 1941

Brig + B.I.O. left on road with Div Comd and Lt Col. met Gen Komer and staff at Ben BA. aerodrome - conference - 17 Bde allotted most important task in Calabria viz. Wtting Div in MACHIA area in squashing a strong enemy armoured force etc in that area and then proceeding towards BEN GASSI. Brig then ordered by Gen Mackay to receive area around AN-EL-GASALA in preparation for moving Bde forward before following day. Brig received order and proceeded on way home - was amazed to find Bde on the move. The order was issued by Lt Col. Div without reference to the G.O.C.

Brig + B.M. proceeded to Div to endeavour to ascertain reason for move & but obtained ~~no~~ little satisfaction merely being told that there would otherwise have been too great congestion on the road.

The Bde bivouaced on N side of road vicinity kilo 147. Brig met G.O.C. on way home - Gen was just as surprised as Brig at the arrangements.

Sunday 26 January 1941.

B.I.O. and billeting party left at 0600 hrs and battalion parties to site by the sea at AIN-EL-GAZALA. Rather a pleasant shot practically all areas having a frontage to the sea.

Brig. B.M. and G.I. (Col Vasey) went forward on recon of site for recon camp in reference to proposed operations in MACHHIL area. After considerable difficulty they arrived at HQ. 7 ARMD DIV where they were informed that the enemy had withdrawn from MACHHIL. Party returned to Camp disappointed that the enemy appeared to have started thwarting us from an important operational task.

27 January 1941 Monday

Brig visited 6 Div ~~to~~ to receive further orders and discussion.

17 Bn arrived at camp.

Very unpleasant day of dust and wind. The hardier members of the Units had a stoint.

28 January 1941 Tuesday

Brig with receipt from all units plus Det of Engineers, Ambl, defensive pl from 16 Bn, 1 P Coy, Pioneer pl from 15 Bn acting on orders, <sup>from 6 Div</sup> set out to make a recon of MACHILI area. The plans were changed by receipt of a "MOST IMMEDIATE" message which instructed the party to call at Div H.Q. before moving fwd. After call at 6 Div the whole party with exception of Bn COs and I.Os. Brig & 17 Bn etc to Camp with warning order to move next morning. The recon party waited whilst Brig. & 17 Bn visited H.Q. 19 Bde <sup>from</sup> at conference 19 Bde the following points emerged

17 Bde to extend line held by 19 Bde to the South.

16 Bde to come up as soon as Q. situation allows

C.O.C. outlined plan - Inter Bde Bde shown.

Policy - Harass enemy and give impression that we are to attack along this line.

1 P Coy (less one Coy) to come under Command 17 Bde for left flank protection.

No patrols South of MACHILI.

Tuesday 28 January 1941 Conca.

1. Hold guard in DERNA area
2. 17th to prolong line SOUTH.
3. Active patrolling - improve position and inflict losses on enemy.

Armed Div on way up.

There was discussion about moving forward on left flank to GIOVANNI BERTA as suggested by Brig Robertson.

G.O.C. stated that future role should be move across desert and not along coast.

Brig and B.M. returned to Camp.  
Remainder of party to busuacca for night.

Wednesday 29 January 1941

B.I.O. and part of I Sect. left camp early and proceeded with Col Walker's party from 87 km to select site in area beyond MATUSA. Very difficult country and considerable difficulty experienced in pin-pointing locality. At about 1200 hrs Brig + B.M. arrived H.Q. 19 Bde and Chaltee for a talk then proceeded to proposed site which was finally located in a wadi at point 386 218. The moving of Bde H.Q. was not the smoothest on record - the Convoy was rather badly mixed up with the Artillery and 87 km and spent a good many unnecessary hours on the road - however at a rather late hour all was completed and personnel and vehicles were satisfactorily disbursed of. Col Cremon and staff arrived.

Thursday 30 January 1941.

Brig, B.M. + Staff established in a cave as Bde H.Q. + Col Cremon with them. Gen Mackay called in afternoon for discussion with Brig. Chestries and J. B. again under Command and both established in temp H.Q. in our area.

At 1355 message from GOC. 6 Div. that 19 Bde were in DEANS and would advance as far as possible. The removal of 4<sup>th</sup> Bn meant that 17 Bde was responsible for its right flank. During night 30/31 85 km

Thursday 30 January 1941. (Contd).

were to establish one Coy astride road at 8445 and after clearing bank WADI DEANA another Coy astride road at 8450. During afternoon 30 Jan, Coy 86 occupied Wadi head at 1936 and during night 30/31 Jan attempts to find track across Wadi at 1639.2. 85 Coy reached objectives but by <sup>morning of 31st</sup> night 86 had not found a track.

At 2230 Capt Vial of 6 Div called with Division's operation order confirming plans of Brig as outlined to G.I. 6 Div earlier in day.

Friday 31 January 1941

0700 hrs Conference of O.C.s at Bde H.Q. O.C. issued verbally and later confirmed in writing. No vehicular tracks yet available over WADI DEANA. 85 Bn most difficult task moving N. side of WADI, with no vehicular crossing available every effort being made by ~~the~~ 7 Coy RAE. to discover road over WADI. 86 Bn arrived on objective without opposition 87 moved food along line of 86 advance and were later moved fwd beyond Bde H.Q. Bde H.Q. moved to point 155381. No communication with 85 although every effort made to find vehicular crossing 4/0 85 endeavoured to get to his Bn on foot setting out at dusk - Unable to find Bn H.Q. 85 spent miserable night from cold and were hungry

Brig later called for conversation with 85 + was instructed to move 2 Coys food in preparation for forcing Wadi crossing at pt. 0643. No vehicular tracks resulted from days search. Carries which were

Saturday 1 February 1941.

Col Coombes (11 Hossaks) arrived at 0915 hrs and stated that he was arranging for the Candues group F.O.O. to the O.P. as arranged with Maj Ostlow. He stated that his people reported no activity in objective area.

1100 hrs spoke to C.S. & advised him that previously reported enemy O.P. was abandoned. He reported P.W. stated anti-tank ditch astride road approx 6 kias west of GIOVANNI BERTA. & that he advised us to cover the road in vicinity of this ditch also to cover the southern approach to G.B. from CHAULAN. advised C.S. that as soon as objective gained one bn would be sent to cut the road west of the reported AT ditch. Another bn moved north to gain contact south of G.B.

Maj McArthur Ostlow called at 0900 hrs as arranged was handed order and told of possible change of zero hour to 1st light tomorrow & also sur endean sur to get at 1400/2500 hrs supporting 4th bn and Ostlow flank in addition to C.R. M group. At this time C.A. arrived a plan was discussed with



Friday 31 January 1941 (Cont'd)

Marching wadi for road across were  
fired on at about 1800 hrs by MGs and  
AT weapons.

Saturday 1 February 1941.

0830 Brig went fwd to 8/6 Bn from  
where he proceeded with Maj. Porter on  
search for vehicular crossing. Engineers  
later asked to investigate possible  
position for tracks.

G.O.C. accompanied by C.I. called  
on Brigadier. Brigadier later visited 6 Dn

At 1310 hrs Col. of 11 HUSSARS called  
and was able to supply us with  
useful information concerning enemy  
the enemy position.

Brig commented <sup>in 31/1/41</sup> checked up on  
in relation to wireless vehicles with Bns  
working satisfactorily with Bde. Lt Colt  
informed me that there appeared to be a  
breakdown with 8/5 Bn wireless communications  
Sent for Mr Cox who stated that wireless  
vehicles had not been placed with Bns  
on taking over line as normal line  
communication was good, further that  
the wireless vehicle 8/5 Bn. had broken  
down yesterday (30/1/41) and was in the hands  
of L.A.D. he had no reason to offer why I  
had not been informed of the breakdown  
of the vehicle or his own decision not to  
send wireless vehicle to Bns. I immediately  
sent Lt/O 8/5 Bn to inform his CO. that the  
wireless vehicle had broken down and he

him she was told that the Comia  
11 Hussars & 6 Aus Cav. believed that  
the enemy strength was under 500  
and that any show of movement on  
our part would force the enemy to  
withdraw under cover of darkness  
A request was put to him.

1. Deal with enemy post on L flank
2. The enemy at G. B. & re leading S. therefrom
3. An additional  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 25 pdrs to support 86 Bn  
and Cav. on L. flank

An opinion was expressed that the  
could be got into position to cover  
C.M. front in their registration of the  
objective. The assault could be  
launched this afternoon. Brig Commanding  
should be willing to cooperate with  
C.P.A. and if he considered that the  
full weight of Corp. Art. was desirable  
the attack would be postponed  
until dawn or such time as he  
required for registration. After further  
consideration C.P.A. concurred with  
plan and said that if the attack could  
be made today it should be launched.

High Note It is obvious that there is a desire  
to halt the advance of 17 Bde to give time  
for 19 Bde to make up leeway and enter  
G. B. in the method of a Roman triumph  
thus vain men will be satisfied and  
the Angels rejoice.

Saturday 1 February 1941 (cont'd)

would advance on move of the 87 Bn and that he would also provide facilities to see the commencement of this move"

The following WARNING ORDER was issued to LPOs at 1635 hrs.

87 Bn will move fwd crossing S.W. WADI in 0437 as marked on map at 0800 hrs 8 Feb. to line 967447 - 950420.

Comd. Lt. Col. J. G. Walker E.D.

87 Bn, 87 Fd Regt, 87 T Bty and Coy Cheshires, are in Comd. (All to Comd under Comd, (except 87 Fd Regt. in support) at 2000 hrs 1 Feb.

86 Bn (less 1 Coy + Mortar pl.) with one Coy Cheshires under Comd and one Coy 87 Fd Regt in support, will move across S.P. 020356 to cross at 0900 hrs 8 Feb. Axis of advance rd from S.P. to 942428 and occupy a line from 942428 to 921429

Object Capture of enemy camp at rd junction 9245 by 87 Bn. 86 Bn to be prepared to exploit to astride road at 950485.

Conference will be held at 87 Bn HQ at 2000 hrs today.

To attend. Brig. Co. 86. Co. 87. Co. 87 Fd Regt  
Co. Cheshires Co. T. Bty. B.M. S. C.

Coy 86 Bn with mortar pl on WADI will patrol fwd at discretion of Coy. Comd during tonight and tomorrow.

Sunday 8 Feb 1941

B.I.O. went to reconnoitre site for Bde HQ.  
assured site too difficult  
8/7, 8/6 on move towards Fort and  
GIOVANNI BERTA. 8/5 who were mainly  
across WADI BERTA were recrossing  
WADI and moving in support as  
near. At 1130 Brig and Operations  
Group moved fwd to establish  
advanced Bde HQ. Met B.I.O. on  
the way who reported that the  
proposed site was not suitable  
owing to the roughness of the country.  
The slight 'breat' in the proposed  
plan was singularly unimportant  
as the enemy had decided to call  
it no fight and we went straight  
ahead. The following details from  
the operations log are indicative  
of the position.

1430 Brig and B.M. entered FORT.

1425 Sent 2nd message for Maj. Outlaw.  
Plan for Cav. to recon to GIOVANNI BERTA  
which was reported by Arabs to  
be evacuated.

1440 advised by Capt. French Med. Sgt.  
that this Regt was to fire concentrations  
on Fort at 1500 and then further  
along road. Made certain through  
F.O.O. 8/4 Bty that no fire would come  
down on Fort or roads unless  
called for.

1500 Cav. patrol with section AT guns  
went fwd to recon.

Ordered 8/2 Bn to move fwd to  
ridge approx 2 miles North 8/6 Bn  
moved to first south of FORT.

Sunday 8 Feb. 1941 (Contd)

1600. Cav. reported: GIOVANNI B. Clear,  
the HQ. established at 979538.

The town is out of bounds to all  
troops. 1st Chevin Bn will supply one  
Co. to garrison the Town.

The 17th Bn gp was ordered into position  
to cover approaches to the Town from  
EAST and N.E.

16th Bn gp ordered to follow 17th and  
occupy line covering approaches to  
Town from West + N.W.

16th Bn to supply rear guard on line  
of march + pick up any stragglers.

17th to receive 15th Bn area. 15th Bn to  
occupy line to cover approaches  
from South.

Shortly after 8 o'clock Major J.  
Williams of Div arrived and told us  
to expect an order to move westwards  
tomorrow. He was told that the Cav.  
had reported that road had been  
blown and there was a gap of 20' wide  
and 10' x 15' deep and the Country on  
either <sup>side</sup> was considered to be  
impassable. It was also pointed  
out that the Cav. had been ordered to  
move at first light to bring in an  
accurate report and to move 10 miles  
west and en route examine the FORT.  
Also in view of the Cav report that the  
road was mined this side of the gap  
that the Engineers had been instructed  
to send a party to unarm the mines and  
to report on the road block and  
Country alongside with a view to passing

Sunday 7 Feb. 1941 (Contd).

It was suggested that he might consider the advisability of returning to Div with this information and at the same time a statement as to the fitness of the troops involved was stated to be as follows:-

1. The 47 Bn had travelled 47 1/2 miles measured on the map since the ~~beginning~~ op. commenced and their feet were in such a bad condition as to suggest immediate treatment by the M.O. by way of putting adhesive plaster over the damaged parts. This was brought about by the extremely rough and stony nature of the country which they had traversed which had also been responsible for a large number of them being sackless caused solely by the stony nature of the country they had traversed and not by ill-fitting boots and socks. It was considered that their present physical state warranted a period of 48 hrs to make them fit for the road. It was further pointed out that if they met opposition tomorrow they would be unable to attack but would simply have to take up a position and fight a defensive battle.
2. 46 Bn should be comparatively fresh despite their night operation the night before last when they began their movement at approx 2<sup>am</sup> but they had a night's sleep last night.

Sunday 2 February 1941 (Contd)

3. The 45 Bn had recrossed the WADI today and their physical state could not be ascertained but later Col. King was of the opinion that they could march tomorrow and arrive comparatively fresh.
4. It was believed that the Bde could not be concentrated before 1500 hrs tomorrow. First Bde Echelon and 7d. Amb. would have to be got on the road ahead of the 45 Bn. Before the 45 Bn moved a Coy of the 46 Bn had to be withdrawn from across the WADI starting a first light and it was estimated that they would be in a position to make a start time for the 45 Bn. 1000 hrs.

In view of these factors Capt Williams was asked to state that whatever order was given an attempt would be made to carry it out but it was felt to be a responsibility in the interests of the Div to point this out to C.I. It was suggested that he make a decision as to whether it was sufficiently important or not to return to Div, particularly as the troops had been forced to the limit in the light of a belief expressed by C.I. that the achievement of today's objective would provide a halt for a few days, therefore they had been driven to extreme limits.

It was reiterated that it was believed that the views would be welcomed that whatever order came would be attempted. Capt. Williams decided to return.

Sunday 8 February 1941 (Contd)

After an exhausting day Brig. & B.M. retired to sleep at Commandant's House

As a result of further message from B.D. orders to continue the advance were issued late at night.

Monday 9 February 1941

Bns. and attached Gps on move starting from 0730 hrs.

Rde H.Q. was ready to move from early morning but was standing by owing to the congestion on the roads.

G.O.C., G.I., C.R.A., called for discussion with Brig

At 1430 hrs the following tasks for 9 Feb 1941 was received from G.I.

John ~~and~~ with 1 Sqn Cav. 1 Bty. Td. Reg. see H.A. Bty. 'P' Bty. less one Tp. to move to and occupy SHONTA on 4 Feb. Div to provide Tpts to lift 250 remainder left in 1st line Tpt. Start at daylight.

At about 1530 hrs Rde H.Q. moved to to large white building at 775477 where we were conveniently quartered. Bns moved fwd to approx the same area

Opn Instruction No. 16 issued



Tuesday 4 Feb. 1941

As per In accordance with Op. Inst. No. 16. 2/6, 2/5, 2/7 Bns continued advance with attached troops to SLOVTA, SAVOIA, & FAIDIA respectively. ~~to~~ all troops were lorry borne. At about 0830 hrs B.I.O. and party left to recon site for Bde H.Q.

No opposition was encountered by any of our Bns. who were all on their objectives at an early hour.

At 1000 hrs Div. Lt. Maj. Wilhams advised that 19 Bde was moving on <sup>towards</sup> BARCE. Asked to move before noon - essential that road be kept clear other than <sup>extra</sup> M/T moving down to M/T is to move eastwards.

2/4 Bty to revert to Div. Comd.

Brig Wilhams also requested us to find out how 2/6 Bn was progressing as Div was anxious for them to get there and for M/T back as soon as possible.

In afternoon Brig visited Creve CREVET, 2/5 Bn and contacting Maj. Weather Ouslow at CREVE. Brig did not return to <sup>775477</sup> but slept at the new position which had been selected at 064430.

Wednesday 5 February 1941.

Rde H.Q. moved at 0800 hrs to new  
~~remained at same~~ location.  
Throughout the day instructions for  
a move forward were awaited but  
the matter of transport held up our further  
move.

At 1855 hrs orders were received  
from 6 Div to move one Bn to BAACE  
to take over garrison duties. Orders  
were issued to 8th Bn group to prepare  
for the move & 7th Regt providing  
the necessary additional transport.  
The move was covered by Op. Ind. No. 17  
which was issued

S/M visited C1 REVE.

Thursday <sup>Feb</sup> ~~Jan~~ 1941.

Bde spent day at present location. Terrific day of rain and hail - the cold was intense.

Orders issued to 87 Bn to move in afternoon to TECNIS and continue at first light 7 Feb. to GAF EL CANDRU area. Troops to be lifted in B'ech of 87 and 85 Bns and Bde H.Q. Troops to return to units after arrival at GAF EL CANDRU. The movement orders also provided <sup>for</sup> movement of 85 Bn on 7+8 Feb and recon of areas around BARCE and EL GHEHA. and detailed the movement of the carrying vehicles after moving troops.

B.I.O. sent by Brig. to investigate alleged shooting and robbery by ARABS of Italian settlers.

Orders were received for 1 Cheshires to move to area vicinity KULO Road EL FAIDIA - BARCE and revert to Div. Control from time of departure.

Friday 7 February 1941

An early start with instructions to move to area PT 281. N 612027. At 0800 hrs Bde HQ. Conway passed Lt. at about 2 miles along road to SLOVTA.

Brig & B/M went forward and met Lt Col Sp Br and Col Walker on road near TENNIS. Lt Col Sp directed Brig to area approx 4 miles south of BARCE. Brig & B/M established themselves in temporary advanced HQ. in farmhouse which was still occupied by Italian Colonists. Orders were given to Brig. to move Bde HQ. and 1 Bn to position south of BENGASI.

Things did not go well with the Convoy. The Regt and Cheshires ahead were in trouble and progress was very slow. At entrance to detour Lt Capt halted the convoy and sent S.O. ahead to report position to Brig. S.O. reported to Brig at about 1630 hrs. and was sent back to Lt Capt with new orders and instructions concerning order of march. On receipt of orders Lt Capt moved Bde HQ. into lovanac position in preparation for an early start next day.

The rain had continued intermittently throughout the day and our drivers who had become accustomed only to sand were suddenly in a sea of mud

Saturday 8 February 1941.

At 0755 Lt Col 15 Bn reported to Brig that  
the HQ column was on its way. It  
had rained heavily throughout the  
night and roads through SETOU area  
from area of adv. Bde HQ to BAPCE  
were in very bad condition.

During morning a report was made  
to Lt Col that hostile AKABs were threatening  
local farmers and ~~arrangements~~<sup>instructions</sup>  
were given Maj Porter of 15 Bn to take  
necessary action. Chestries moved  
forward to Div. area.

1300 Head of Bde HQ column  
emerged from pass and was  
directed to FORT on outskirts of BAPCE  
17 Bn were also directed to the FORT.

1400 hrs Maj Williams from 60 Div  
arrived with the news that this  
Campaign was complete and  
that 17 Bde would go into rest  
camp ~~for~~. Brig sent Lt Col to FORT to  
arrange areas.

1600 Brig's group moved into  
FORT and Bde H.Q. was quartered  
in barracks for the first time  
since leaving Australia.

Sunday 9 Feb. 1941

Rain still continued.

Brig had conference visit from Maj. Gen Maitland Wilson (newly appointed Gov. of Libya) who had spent a very cold night in the bus in his boggy car

G.O.C. + Cr. called on Brig.

The crossing over the blown road which had been prepared by the Engineers was completed and came into use at about 17<sup>30</sup> hrs.

Monday 10 Feb. 1941

Capt. Patterson spent most of day with a tractor extracting bogged vehicles from the mud at the detour.

Rde concert party with the assistance of the Ho Band gave an excellent concert in the evening.

Tuesday. 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1941.

Reg. went to BENGHASI to attend dinner given to Regs. and 6 Inst. Div. Senior Officers, to meet Prime Minister of Australia, Sir Robert Menzies. Work on Pass is progressing well, large convoys are using this road now and the flow of traffic is little affected.

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1941.

An early parade was held and by 1000 hrs the whole of the available personnel of 17 Bde were in position for an inspection by the Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies. He arrived with the Corp band. Lt Thomas Blaney and the Div band Gen M<sup>r</sup> accompanying him. After a general salute was given the official party moved fwd and Sir Robert inspected the stand and after gathering the men in closer spoke a few words to them. His speech was shrewd and well balanced leaving no possible loop hole for criticism which he proofs so love to level. He touched on the political

Wed. 12<sup>th</sup> 41.

continued. importance of the campaign into Libya and of the great blow to the military prestige of Italy. His message was, that all was well with our folks at home, but which we were to carry on in far off fields of battle, they would play their part by making certain that there was an ample supply of the necessities of war in the shape of modern weapons and supplies. "The speech was well received by the troops who at the call of King Luigi gave three hearty cheers for Lin Lubich. The Bandits Officers of our three Bns were presented and received congratulations from the whole division.

Today three patrols from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn were sent out in the BARCE area and the reports all show that there is little or no trouble with the Arabs in the areas West of the town of BARCE.



18th AUST INF BDE AT BARDIA/

The Bde commenced taking over the line on the night of 27/12 Dec. By the night of 2/5 Jan we had edged forward to within a few hundred yards or so of the enemy defences. Patrols had been active in seeking information and delousing mines and several engagements were fought which gave us the first prisoners captured by Australians in this war. We had thus fulfilled our prior role of misleading the enemy to a belief that the attack would come from our area or therein; we had drawn seven or eight Regts, each of four bns:

Our role in the battle was to continue this ~~deception~~ deception by the action of one bn; while the rest of the bde. attacked at a point 10,000 yds to the North. They would advance South towards the fresh bn who would rope in the enemy prisoner. The starting point for these operations was the line held which covered 16,000 yds. The 2/6 moved along the rough Wadis under cover of darkness to demonstrate against the enemy at dawn on the 3 Jan. Their role was to gain close contact and pen them down on their front which they soon did. The enemy responded soon with protective arty fire which was maintained in the greatest intensity until the morning of the 3rd day of the battle. Post 11 garrisoned by selected enemy troops raked the 6th with fire while from other areas 7 counter attacks were launched and repelled. The 6th added undying lustre to the already illustrious record of that regt by its action at BARDIA which was of the greatest importance to the general operation. Their steadiness under intense shellfire their ~~steadiness under intense~~ attacks under M.G. fire and the final capture of Post 11 have never been surpassed.

The 2/5 plus 2 coys 2/7 were destined to open the advance from the North. The 5th commenced to move at midday on the 2nd and the coys of the 7th at dawn on the 3rd. They were to take up the running up on the BARDIA rd where another bde finished its Southern move; after a most trying night the 5th were in position on time ready to attack when the C.O. was wounded. Worse still the expected tanks did not arrive but at Zero the advance started on a front of approx 2500 yds. They were met by unlocated field guns firing over open sights and M.G.s and mortar fire of great intensity. The raking fire of the guns to their left flank brought the 5th to a standstill while the coy of the 7th further right advanced with great difficulty. An officer of the 5th gathered a platoon and by an incredible movement silenced and captured a 40 guns and captured over 2000 PWS. The advance then continued but our barge had been lost; so it was a case of fighting supported by our own weapons only.

We were then moving against the enemy strength we had previously drawn into the pocket on a depth of 10000 yds. They fought with guns blazing over open sights and shot at our troops with MGs and mortars which slowed up the advance. Touch between coys was impossible as each turned to fight newly disclosed enemy elements. By nightfall our advance tps were 3000 yds out. They had then captured over 5000 pws about 60 guns besides A/Tk guns MGs and mortars but the situation was terribly confused.

The 8th had brought their last coy into the battle late in the afternoon. Fortunately 2 were available to keep the fight going while the coys engaged were reorganised and dangerous gaps in the flank were filled.

Our losses in officers had been heavy and 2 had been treacherously shot after enemy elements had surrendered. At 9 O'clock that night the situation was an nightmare

BATTLE OF BARDIA PAGE 2.

a nightmare but not incapable of solution.  
Two days of the 7th fought forward another 1500 yds in darkness  
and the 5th covered the flank and supported the forward tps.  
Day broke with the situation secure and fighting still going  
on. The work during the night was by bomb and bayonet and  
the exploits of the tps mostly led by young subalterns was  
magnificent. Control, movement, and mutual fire support was applied  
more correctly than ever on an exercise which was the chief  
factor to success. By dawn 12 enemy Bns had been accounted for  
and further guns etc were taken. During the second day patrols  
of one or two carriers roped in more prisoners and the infantry  
added to the further total of over 6000. Under cover of night further  
advances were made by the depleted coys who fought in  
his posts until a way had been cut through his wire. In each  
post was a garrison never less than 70 and at POST 11 over 400.

In some places the fighting was so intense that we were unable  
to get our wounded out until the battle ended but the tps still  
pressed on which was their only salvation. To secure the forward  
move advances were made against enemy reserves on our flank.  
These actions gave us the bulk of our prisoners.

Dawn on the third day found us still fighting and under  
intense artillery and mortar fire when another brigade advanced on our  
left and created a threat to the enemy that eased the situation.  
Our tps weary beyond words pressed forward captured POST 11 and  
soon cleaned up the balance on our front. Our role was this fulfilled  
in its entirety but only by the superb fighting qualities  
of our tps supported magnificently by Victorian gunners particularly  
by their counter battery work on the southern sector  
and fire on the enemy posts in that vicinity:

The Battle of Tobruch will go down in history as one in which fighting was the exception. It would appear that the enemy considered the staging of an attack sufficient to vindicate his surrender with honor. As at Bardia I7 Aust. Inf. BDe. were denied any opportunity for spectacular results but had ample opportunity for work of real value. The 2/6 Bn. were selected to assist the Brigade responsible for the break-through. They covered a distance of 22 miles to enter the perimeter and led the attack in a central position. At only one Post did the enemy fight but the 6th soon stopped that business. They continued on to the head of the Wadi which was the limit of their exploitation.

The Role of the 2/7 Bn. was to enter the perimeter and relieve another Bn. as early as possible and then exploit to a line abreast the 6th. Prior to this task and before Zero, the 5th and 7th demonstrated by fire against the enemy right flank to draw his attention from the main point of entry. They both did a good job. It was felt that the 7th may have difficulty in crossing the mine-field and anti-tank ditch which would probably not be bridged as they arrived. During the hours of darkness on the 21st. special patrols "deloused" the mine-field. To facilitate the crossing of the anti-tank ditch ladders, picks and shovels were carried. The 7th. arrived on time and soon completed the relief and exploitation without a casualty.

The 5th. Bn. who had been brought to handy position during the night, advanced to the perimeter when exploitation was complete. They advanced some three miles under shell-fire with perfect steadiness. During the march a new Role. forced a change of direction. They swung round and moved on as if on parade. Previous study envisaged probable work, which was supplemented by early reconnaissance. This permitted the 7th. to relieve the 6th. and add their front to their line. They also provided patrols (fighting) to clean up the Wadis at first light.

An enemy Fort armed with Naval guns had caused us some trouble so it was determined to capture it at first light on 22nd Jan. A coy of 6th Bn., supported by a Bty. of Arty., advanced over 3000 yards to deploy for attack. The enemy saw them and the move and surrendered. Over 400 prisoners and 4 = 6", 6- 3" naval guns was the prize.

The 5th. who had helped another Bde. on the 21st. were now back and continued the advance to the limit within our area. The 6th. Bn. were now helping another the other Bde. marching on Tobruch. They captured important territory with out loss, and marched another 16 miles on the 22nd. Jan.

The 7th. Bn. cleaned up all enemy elements in the Wadis by midday on the 22nd. Our front was thus clear of enemy and we had gained ground not contemplated at the commencement of the Action. We had secured flank protection for the Bde. destined to march on Tobruch and thus a reasonably good job was completed. Over 3000 were taken and many guns, M. G.s etc. were part of the bag.

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. 41.

During the night of 12/13 enemy raiders flew twice over the Pass Rd and attempted to bomb the road. Both of the attempts were unsuccessful and the nearest bomb fell 100<sup>+</sup> ft from the road. The engineers are going ahead with the work and the road should soon be in good shape, the only big holdup will be the replacing of the bridge which was blown. The guards on the road have increased their vigilance and have placed extra <sup>A/A</sup> protection in the shape of Ben. The order came from 6<sup>th</sup> Div. warning the 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Bde to prepare schemes of defence against air-borne and parachute troops. 17<sup>th</sup> Bde will place security guards on the air-drome in BARCE. The scheme when ready for execution will be forwarded to Div. H.Q. This scheme will embrace the whole of the BARCE area as controlled by the 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Bde. All units were warned against conversation and secret signals being "tapped in on" as the wires have ~~been~~ not been well enough reorganized to check against this trouble. The Big made recordings of his impressions of Baddie & Lobach they are here in type within four.

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 41.

During the night 13/14 Feb. another attempt was made by enemy aircraft to bomb the Abu Road. This second attempt was also a failure. The units are carrying out training programs which take in both phases of operation not met with in our recent campaigns.

Patrols were sent out from the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn and reports all indicate that every thing is quiet between the settlers and Arabs in this area.

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1941.

An order came from 6<sup>th</sup> Aust Div from 1<sup>st</sup> to send a recon party to an area round AGEDABIA, a town approx 100 miles South of BENGHASI. The Bn chosen was the 2<sup>nd</sup> and they were under 6 hours warning. The Recon party left at 1400 hrs. The 4<sup>th</sup> Bn will take over the patrols which the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn were doing, these patrols will only be every second day now. Lt Col. Fulwell of the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn field sub. spent the night with the officers of the 17 Bde HQ. before leaving 16<sup>th</sup> Aust Div to become A.D.M.S. for 9<sup>th</sup> Aust Div.

Sunday 16 Feb. 41. A further instruction was received from 6 Inst. Div. to warn the 1st Bde that they were to take up a defensive position at the road and in the Massa Lt. Budo. area. supported by 1 Fo. Bty. Church. Services were held in the Bde Hall Massa for the RC's and Services for the other religions and all were well attended. The concerts have been a great success at night and are well attended by all. Major Palmer with his writing room is providing the troops with facilities which have of inestimable value.

Monday 17 Feb. 41. The 2/4 Bn moved out to the AGEODABIA area leaving at 0900 hrs. The Brig & Bde. also went to the area. Units of the 2/5 Bn who were doing security work reported to their unit H.Q. today at 1300 hrs. The visit of Lt Col Vesey, G.I. 6 Inst Div to give a warning order of the move of 17 Bde to AGEODABIA area set the wheels of administration into motion. The units were warned and an advanced HQ was organized. They were to stand by ready to move at 0700 hrs 19 Feb.

20

Tuesday 18. Feb. 41. 0820. Advance Bde HQ. left  
the BARCE area and after calling at CYR.  
bnd set out for BARRACA. where Brig.  
reported 6. Aust. Div. at 0915. Then the trip  
was commenced in earnest, BENGHASI was  
reached and on the Southern Rd further where  
we expected to find a wireless van  
waiting for us, there wasn't one to be seen.  
Capt. Cox was left with instructions to try  
and locate the set and the party pushed  
on. As we reached the AGEDABIA area signs  
of the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Div's brush with the enemy  
could be seen. Many tents, tents and  
dumps of stores could be seen along the  
road. When we reached AGEDABIA no trace  
could be found of the Armoured Div elements  
with which we were to contact. The Brig. pushed  
on hoping to make contact but we reached  
our 2 1/2 hr area with doing so. The party halted  
in an area in rear of the 2 1/2 hr - while the  
Brig went forward with the band office 2 1/2 hr.  
The party had been dive bombed and  
machine gunned on the road up and the  
2 1/2 hr reported the enemy aircraft very active.  
The wireless van which was sent on in the  
morning by an unknown officer, was located at  
the 7 kilo mark North of AGEDABIA. and came on  
with the party. When Capt Cox arrived he gave  
them the necessary instructions re frequency etc.  
A message reporting arrival was sent at 1825  
to 1<sup>st</sup> AUST. CORP.

Brig's Note. On arrival at Advance HQ.  
7 ARMED. DIV. at 1445 it was found that they  
had left at 1300 hrs. Brig & Bde contacted 2 1/2 hr  
and Brig Laffont Gabut.

Wednesday 19 Feb. 41. Brig Bb & C.O. 2/7 Bn went  
fwd to recee. fwd areas and with an officer  
of the King's Dragoon Guards they were going to  
inspect the FORT at MARSAL BREGA. when 6  
German planes dived on them and were  
later joined by 2 more flights of 6 planes.  
They were dive bombed machine gunned and  
had the cannons which these planes carry  
used on them for 20 minutes. At this  
stage the HURRICANES arrived and a dogfight  
took place, during which 2 German  
planes were shot down, 1 into the sea and  
the other on the land. 1 HURRICANE was forced  
down but the pilot escaped injury. Maps  
obtained were forwarded to 1<sup>st</sup> AUST CORP  
per Major Rims. Plan for defensive form. is  
along track running S.E. from MARSAL BREGA. a form.  
covered on the right by marches impassable to AFV  
and on left by sand dunes and hilly country.  
It is proposed to place 2/7 Bn in sight with CAV.  
to protect left flank and responsible for  
covering tracks across WADI and fwd to marsh running  
South to MAYDA. To conform with defensive plan  
C.O. 2/7 Bn. was ordered to recee a bivouac area  
which would be the first move in the def. plan.  
CAV. similarly engaged in carrying out recee. to  
fit into the Plan. It is desirable to have them  
at BIR EL SUERA. but if impracticable at BIR EL GINN.  
Major Rims 1<sup>st</sup> AUST CORP was asked to est a delivery  
Point. NW crossroads near MELAN EN NOGRA. In the  
fwd disposition it is proposed to place  
1 Coy free french under comd 2/7 Bn with the  
other Coy at AGEDABIA. to release the Coy of  
2/7 Bn there. The form. of troops under



19 Feb cont.

men. Comd remained a mystery during most of the day but 20's and other people were sent out to find them. By 17.30 hrs all but the 155 AA BTY had been located in areas back for many miles.

!O. carried out recon for a more suitable place for the advanced HQ of this Bde and an ideal spot was found, the Brig decided to move in the early morning.

20 Feb. 41. Thursday

A patrol sent out by the King Dragoon Guards contacted the enemy 22 Kilos West of EL AGHEILA. The enemy in 3 armoured cars with a gun, which was thought to be a Breda, mounted on a truck fired in the patrol. The patrol engaged them with their Boys anti tank rifles and put one <sup>hand</sup> / car out of action. The armoured car was thought to have been a FIAT ANSALDO 611. The 2/7 Bn moved from its defensive position in the first stage of their advance to the defensive form. On receipt the news that there were armoured cars active they were moved across to cover the road. The Dragoons made contact with the enemy 19 Kilos West of El Agheila later in the day. They reported a grounded German aeroplane with damaged motor carriage at this 19 Kilos position. There were 2 parachutes but no bodies and also one of the guns had been taken off. The 2/7 Bn were given 3 4/TK guns and two were

20 Feb 41

sent food to the Dragons, who were to use them as a means of displaying a little "offensive spirit" and to be back in the "showing of the flag" as far west as the porties. The Dragons were warned of the possibility of mines having been set on their front under cover of the enemies' activity. The body of an Australian pilot taken from a HURRICANE was buried by the Dragons as a sp. B.5889., the body was not identified. The 155 A.A. Bty. are moving in to the area tonight and will take up position around AGEODABIA until moved fwd.

21 Feb. 41 Friday

Brig had Lig. Officer for camp and also the Lig. Officer from 6th Div. Capt Hooker to see him today and the question of communications was gone into. He wished to put jitters on the lines but the Brig indicated that he preferred speech when in contact with the units. The Aide Supply Officer Lt Lyell went into the plan for the supplies of units and was told to see that the Supply Officer for Camp or Div came to see the Brig personally. The Brig wished to see them and give them his plan for the supply points and the program of the supply system. Brig saw the 2/3 1st Regt and arranged that they place 2 secs of 2 guns to

21 Feb 41

cover the left flank with the CAV.  
Col Walker was given the situation and plan and  
was instructed to go ahead with the program  
of his defensive hole and to have his  
rear coys staggered to greater depth.  
Major Beck of the 4<sup>th</sup> Jd. Sub. brought a sec  
into the 17 Bde area and also has a  
Med. Sec with both the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn and the Dragons.  
Beck saw the Engineers from 1st Bnd Camp and  
made a request that something should be  
done in the development of water in the  
fwd areas.

Saturday 22 Feb 41.

Today has been a most extraordinary one  
in as much as the signals section has  
handled a phenomenal amount of traffic and  
what is more interesting a high percentage  
is handled by the cipher section. Messages  
dealing with every branch of administration  
and operation were received and dealt  
with by the Brig and Bde. The reports  
from our fwd people the Dragons showed  
no enemy ground activity as far west as  
EL AGHEIRA. In reports 10 heavy type M.T. appears  
armed car type in westerly direction. No  
NO other movement seen as far as XA 5885.  
The whole of the 17 Bde Group area was  
visited by dive bombers who were very  
aggressive in their tactics. They totalled  
at least 18 and it is certain that

22 Feb. 41 Continued

Messerschmidt ME 110 were used and also a type of bomber which has not been seen before. Reports were conflicting re the number of engines on this bomber but it was very clear by afternoon that they had 4 engines. The activity commenced at 1045 following a visit at 0915 by a lone bomber and continued till 11.10 hrs. In the whole of the area there were 11 casualties several of whom were serious, 2 officers of the Dragons were casualties. The Brig had a representative of Prof. Engineer who see him and he gave him the plan re the possible chances of water development in the fwd areas. The 2/3 Fd Regt's O.C. came to see the Brig, it was after the air attack and he was explaining how the planes had concentrated on his vehicles. When asked about dispersion he said that the max. distance between vehicles for control had been 80 yds but that they were now moving out to something like 4-500 yds. The Staff Officer of today flew back HQ and he smoothed out the supply and other administrative worries. The 155<sup>th</sup> AA Bty was ordered to report to AMIRYA forthwith and this caused the Dragon to protest that there would be too little AA protection when the E. enemies air activity was greatest. This protest was passed on the 1st Corp and the 17 Bde's support unit.

23 Feb. 41 Sunday.

The situation in the forward areas had settled down and after the previous days activities there was a calm. The calm continued throughout the day as far as the ground ops. were concerned but at approx 1045 5 enemy aircraft dived down on the headquarters and commenced heavy machine gunning and low level dive bombing attacks. This continued till approx 1110 hrs. Low reports began to come in, showing that the aircraft had been active over the whole of the 17 Bde Troop area using the same tactics. They would select targets such as, insufficiently dispersed M.T. and troop who had not taken cover in the slit trenches. The casualties totalled 13 in the whole of the Troop for the day one man taken dead from wounds received, 2 casualties were officers of the King's Dragoon Guards.

Monday 24 Feb. 41.

Ground operations by the enemy were continued when an enemy mechanized patrol attacked members of the KDC's and captured an officer of the Anti Tank Platoon Lt. Rowley and killed 2 of his men. One of the Doagons armoured cars became bogged off the side of a track but the crew escaped and the car was destroyed by fire. This activity by the enemy gave them possession of Mt. Jukela but later in the day they were seen to have withdrawn and it almost looked as though they were preparing to withdraw generally. But in the mech. patrols which had contacted our people. The G.I. Mt. Trig. arrived at midday and stayed the night. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Bde reverted to 6<sup>th</sup> Div band as from 1200 hrs. The 10<sup>th</sup> for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde visited the HQ and was given all information possible. Sketches which had been prepared showing the new road as on the ground were handed over to him and all information re our disposition etc. Part of the late afternoon showed nothing of importance and that no movement had been seen.

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 41.

There was little air activity by the enemy today, the only planes which flew over any of our areas seemed to be more concerned with recon. The area as none of them made any attempt at hostile action. They were very careful, over our patrols in the food areas, to fly over them several times, probably to identify them & their intentions. The story of Mr Rowley's capture was made a little clearer when the Mackillan gave his story to the Brig. They were in the recon vehicles and were moving along the main road, when fired on by what appeared to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. by swaying off the road. The batman was killed by a shell and the others lay by the side of the old. Mr Rowley went forward to what he thought was a group of prisoners and a German Officer came forward and took his prisoner. After marching the prisoners away they bowed the road and behind the Fort and destroyed it by fire.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 41

General Mackay called with his staff to see the brig and after the conference the 2/3 Fd Regt were warned to move out of the area on relief by another Fd Regt. The General had had experience of the air activity here for, as he arrived just off the main road a enemy aircraft flew overhead. He was quite calm and remarks remarked that the AA fire seemed a little slow. The brig's Dragon Guards carried out an interesting experiment with some armour plate taken off a grounded German plane. At 300 yards a Rogers Rifle bullet will penetrate it easily but the 303 SAA has no effect. "Enemy air activity appears to be confined to reconnaissance as no large scale attack has been made for four days. His a/c appear to be used for recon duties and it is concluded that personnel are German while supporting troops are Italian. Enemy activity appears to be directed towards stopping our further advance and to ascertain our position and intentions." Col Walker was relieved of the worries of his command for a couple of days and came back to Bde HQ for a rest.



Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 41.

G.I. Col Tracy called and was given the situation as it stood in the fwd area. While he was with the Brig the enemy aircraft dropped a load of bombs in a line across the HQ area. no damage no casualties. Brig. Remington Bde Major and Sig Officer all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde were present and in conference with G.I. & Brig. Brig Remington outlined his proposed plans for the immediate future. K.D.G. were to revert to command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde. 4<sup>th</sup> Jt Regt less one Coy were to take a relieving 4<sup>th</sup> Jt Regt who moved back along road to Lobuck area at 1800 hrs 27<sup>th</sup> Feb.

2/1 To Regt when coming through faintly force their way past the guard in the road and take fwd without a pass. Brig visited Col of K.D.G.

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 41.

The day was very quiet no air activity the 4<sup>th</sup> Bde moved up into a reserve position fwd of the Bde HQ area. The troops were furnished fwd by troop carrying heavy pack. B.I.C. went fwd and after recess guided digging parties to the new Bde HQ site.

Private W/ Diary 31/1/41

0945

Staff Capt.

Checked sig office in relation  
to wireless vehicle (W.V.)

with Ben working satisfactorily  
with Bde. S.C. informed me

that there appeared to be  
a break down with 2/5 R.

~~W.V.~~ wireless communication

Left for M. base who stated

that W.V.s had not been  
placed with Ben on taking  
over line as normal. The

communication was good.

Further that the W.V. 2/5 had  
broken down yesterday (30)

and was in the hands of  
LAD. He had no reason

to offer why I had not

been informed of the breakdown  
of the vehicle on his own  
decision not to send  
W.V. to Am. I immediately  
sent L.O. 2/5 to the ~~CO~~  
inform his CO that the  
WV had broken down  
and he would advance  
on the move of the 26th  
and that he would also  
provide facilities to  
see the commencement of  
this move.

Handed to I Seaman  
on 1/2/41. [Signature]

Lt Col T. G. Walker. F.D.

Commendation D.S.O

It proved to command and re establish a situation completely confused by battle at a critical stage; His correct appreciation and sound plan evolved to carry out his orders; his skilful handling of his troops and the inspiration he was to his troops through subjecting himself to intense artillery fire during the greater part of the battle.

Lt Col Walker had been sick for several days before the battle, but the demands made on his services found him <sup>both</sup> capable of rising beyond physical disabilities and brilliantly executing movements to restore order in the <sup>area ahead of</sup> midst of confusion.

He ~~proceeded~~ <sup>proceeded</sup> to the BARDIA Rd, <sup>with Bde reserve</sup> which arrived at approx 1600 hrs when battle conditions had wrought a state of affairs bordering on chaos. He was placed in command of all troops in the sector as an immediate remedy. His clear appreciation based on orders received implemented by his sound plan and skilful handling of troops obtained a measure of security and ability to continue the fight.

At 1700 hrs he put into execution my orders to undertake further objectives, protect the danger flank and provide reserves. By first light the situation was completely restored, posts had been captured and the enemy increasingly pressed by his first troops. Personnel were pouring in as a token of his masterly work.

Throughout the period he was present in the engagement. He was subjected to intense artillery fire which did not deter him from ~~peace~~ planning operations in with his troops. His troops were fighting continuously under fire.

every enemy weaker His energy, initiative  
and courage were an inspiration to his splendid  
troops. His clear orders and firm attitude were  
the chief contributing factors in first restoring the  
situation and then engaging the enemy with  
success until all our objectives had been  
taken and the role of 17 Aust Inf Bde was  
accomplished.

Schiffeld

Mention in despatches

For consistently valuable work in going forward on many occasions under heavy fire to obtain information to pass orders when all other means of communication had failed; and his efficient planning and direction of his section which kept me informed ~~more~~

Soon after the action had opened on 2/6 front my C.O. had been knocked out temporarily and all forward communication had failed. I sent Schiffeld forward to obtain information. He made his way through heavy shell fire and returned with a ~~statement~~ complete statement of the situation.

When the situation on the North coast front was completely obscure he went forward with special orders to C.O. 2/7 and contacted acting C.O. 2/5 for us well. He returned with a complete statement of the situation. To obtain this he passed & repassed areas swept by H.G. fire & shells.

When I took him forward to the NORTH area early on the <sup>first</sup> night of ~~both~~ the battle & he was of the utmost assistance during the whole night as my only S.O. forward.

This section produced excellent battle ~~results~~ results as a consequence of careful planning & planning in his part.

Godfrey M.C. E.D.  
C.M.G.

For careful personal reconnaissance and planning in moving his ~~troops~~ <sup>by</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>approx</sup> 3000 yds from their initial position to close contact with the enemy, his ~~carefully~~ <sup>carefully</sup> planned patrolling policy and clear interpretations of results, all of which was his ~~part~~ <sup>role</sup> ~~before~~ <sup>in</sup> the battle. His initiative, resourcefulness, calmness & clear direction of his Coy during action while subjected himself, to intense shell, mortar & M.G. fire. His <sup>personal</sup> ~~own~~ <sup>most</sup> complete picture; and his close touch with ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~troops~~ <sup>troops</sup> and the instruction he was to his officers and men during battle.

The Coy, commanded by Lt Col Godfrey, had a special role before the battle as well as its active participation in the battle itself. The former was to obtain close contact with the enemy and by action lead the enemy to believe the battle would develop from the South West. Beyond an outline plan issued to Lt Col Godfrey the utmost freedom of action was left to him. He gained close touch with the enemy and instituted a vigorous patrolling programme. The enemy patrols were attacked, the personnel of an Artillery B.P. pierced by the enemy, panicked and the enemy driven off. An enemy attack directed towards the gun was repulsed and personnel captured. His vigorous patrolling & his interpretation of their action were so valuable as to prevent a hard ~~fight~~ <sup>fight</sup> prior to the attack thus saving valuable lives. The quality of his work was demonstrated by the large numbers and quality of enemy encountered in the Southern Sector.

His role in battle was to contain the enemy in the Southern area. He clearly appreciated that the No 11 bank of the W 1001 and the forts on its edge were the only secure points, ~~against~~ <sup>against</sup> intense artillery fire, for which his role could be carried out. At 2300 hours his troops were there and had passed out 147 prisoners. A terrific enemy artillery concentration poured in but their positions caused casualties. Post 11 was partially taken, recaptured & eventually taken. Its garrison left 325 rifles, 22 & 11 95, 12 11 95, 6 anti tank guns and 2, 3" mortars. One Coy lost all its officers and the situation became desperate. Lt Col Godfrey, <sup>under M.G. & mortar fire</sup> ~~at great personal risk~~, reconnoitred from the immediate high points which enabled him to reorganise his Coy & relieve the Coy opposite post 11. He refused to be pinned down by any type of fire and was ~~among~~ <sup>among</sup> his men constantly. He inspired his subordinate officers & troops, ~~without~~

Capt. J. Bishop.

Award - Mention in Despatches

For devotion to duty, success under fire, careful planning to ensure the flow of ammunition during battle; the unflinching delivery of food and water, together with his careful delivery of H.O.S and the ~~ability~~ ability he displayed while left as S.O. to Southern Sector.

Capt. Bishop so planned his supply and administrative arrangements that all units received their requirements throughout the battle without fail. He delivered a hot meal to forward troops on each night of battle. His arrangements provided for the delivery of ammunition to units direct, a method which battle conditions prevent normal procedure, which was of the utmost value to 2/6 Bn. He paid special attention to the delivery of H.O.S and regulated their moves so that they were as free as possible from enemy action in order to receive the wounded to the fullest extent.

When forward Base Hdqrs was established and Command of SOUTHERN SECTOR handed over to C.O. 2/6 Bn Capt. Bishop acted as S.O. His work in this regard was of the highest order.

Before and during the battle he was unceasing in his efforts to secure and the smooth running of his Dept., plus the value of his added Staff duties, contributed, in no small way, to the success of the Base.



He advised, directed & cheered everybody to  
 his efforts. ~~without~~ Without the outstanding  
 courage of his officers, casualties would  
 have been excessive and several counter attacks  
 made by the enemy would probably have been  
 successful.



is disclosed around post 8. In squares 521387 & 522387  
~~features~~ blys are shown on map & full has been noted.

On the WEST face A switch line runs EAST & WEST  
at ~~approx~~ generally 3000-3500 yds from his front-line on  
WADI MVETERED. Along it are five posts protected by wire  
In rear of this line, and contrarily placed, are gun positions.  
The WEST ~~edge~~ <sup>up to switch line</sup> edge of enemy defence is covered by  
Anti tank ditch, wire & 5 posts with 4 supporting posts  
The rough country on his EAST edge is covered by 8 posts  
within the same area.

From SWITCH to BARDIA RD The WEST edge is defended  
by Tank ~~ditch~~ ditch wire plus three mine fields, & 4 posts.  
It is supported by 6 other posts staggered in rear.

(5) Our defences are Coy localities 1500 to 2000 yds apart.  
In the centre the arty occupy ground which cannot be covered  
by foot Coys. Here there is a gap between Coy areas of  
approx 4500 yds.

Roads &  
Communication

(6) Within the enemy defences at BARDIA - S.W. corner are  
3 tactical Rds ~~shown~~ (Ra. BARDIA included) Downward  
of South defences is one rd. from which the front, or ~~South~~  
SOUTHERN RD, ~~of~~ within his defences fork. In the two S.W.  
forks of WADI WADI are Rds leading into his position  
near Post 11. The SOUTHERN RD, within his defences  
was open across Tank ditch, but since his retirement to  
his present area appears to be closed. The ~~hadden~~ ~~to~~  
in the WADIS were open but the gap near Post 11 appears  
to have been closed with wire with two exits protected  
by ~~shooters~~ of the WADI. The BARDIA Rd is mined  
at the point of entrance to his defences

Deduction: A crossing over the Anti Tank ditch  
along Rds would be barred by removal of crossings  
and/or Rds mined. It is thought that the Rd leading  
thru the WADIS would be the best entry but is also  
probably mined.

Decision: More complete data required by  
patrolling

(7) There are 2 foot Rds within the same area.  
The WAD RD is two foot with ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> branch running  
outside the defences. The second or EAST Rd  
leads from about the centre of his SOUTHERN defences  
and at a point about 1000 yds short of Rd  
BARDIA turns S.W. & almost touches the WEST Rd  
as it crosses Rd BARDIA

# Notes

1st Phase Gain entrance S.W. corner  
Secure posts 11. 9 - & 8. Then deal with 7.  
Party engineers to search for & deal with mines  
4/5. 1 Coy. (left)

2nd Phase Gain entrance WADI near PT 4  
1 Pr each to posts 3. 4. 6  
4/5. 1 Coy. (Reserve)

3rd Phase ~~Go~~ Cross WADI at point D. in MURTERED. &  
~~Deal with posts & work~~ dig along N. bank  
Get behind a gun position  
Subsequent Task.

3rd Phase Deal with dog leg

1st Task deal with posts 171 - 176 & part of dog leg  
& S.W. corner Long WADI.  
4/5. Centre Coy.  
Try early, as usual.

2nd Task Gain entrance S.W. corner.  
Secure posts 11. 9 & 8.  
Party engineers for mines.  
4/5. left Coy

3rd Task Cooperation with (1) Centre Coy more forward  
then WADI & gain N.W. Wadi bank & post 7

4th Task Take posts 5. 4 & 6.

~~Method~~  
4/5. Right Coy.

Night Zero - 1 more behind Centre Coy

Method ~~as above~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~

(a) move two dog leg WADI behind centre Coy

(b) Turn right N.W. WADI keep N Bank

attack posts covered by Centre Coy

Note Centre Coy might take 6

Centre

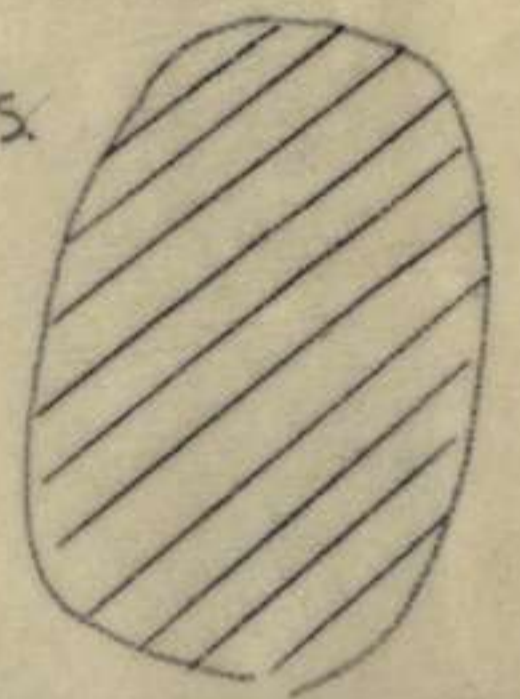
Reserve Coy moves two left WADI.

Take posts left edge to AD SIDI HASSEN FORK.

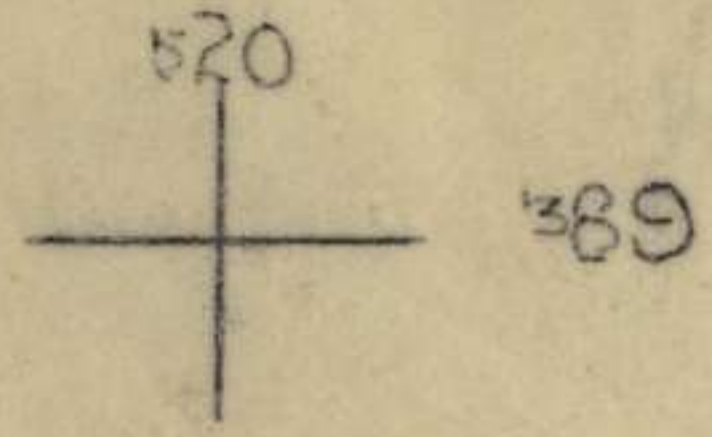
Smoke a cart positions

(5)

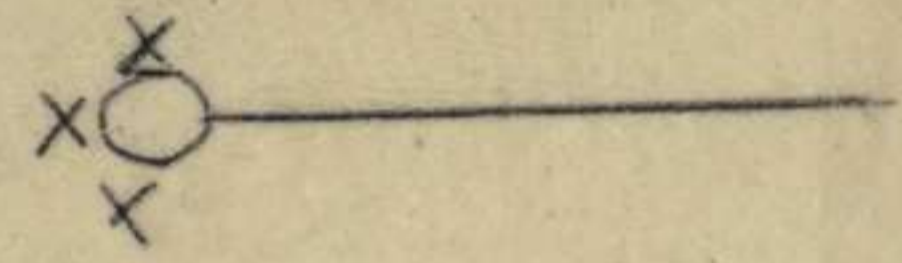
30 DEC.  
0815 - 1000 hrs 14 SHELLS  
1455 - 1722 hrs 235 "



31 DEC  
4 SHELLS  
1015.



31 DEC  
1705 hrs  
SUSPECTED DELAY ACTION  
OR THERMO BOMBS.



31 DEC  
1047 hrs  
1 SHELL  
384

31 DEC  
1015 hrs  
5 SHELLS

510

SHELLING AND BOMB TRACE  
SEAR AREA 31 DEC

REF MAP BARDIA 1:50000

Battle of BARDIA

Notes for conference with Comd Officers.

2 Jan 1941

- (1) What is situation re additional grenades.
- (2) Do wire cutters - lanyards.  
Instruct. to cut near posts - wire soft.
- (3) Blankets for 2/5 - are arrangements O.K.
- (4) Situation re Carriers  
2/7. to send Vickers Carriers - drivers & General -  
at - - Rations for both.
- (5) W.T. What is situation
- (6) Go thro plan in detail - 2/5 - 2/6 - 2/7
- (7) Major Wingley  
(a) Contact C.O. Anti Tank Guns.  
(b) Contact Col Jerome Tanks. today.  
Pl 209. 5060 3857  
Points: Tank plan - when & how  
do they pass S. L
- (8) Staff Capt. Notes

SECRET.

Copy No. 10

27 Feb 41.

17 Aust. Inf. Bde. Op. Instr. No. 23.

1. 2/5 Bn (less one coy now at BEDA FORM) will move on 28 Feb to new area west of AGHDABIA as recce today.
2. Tpt sufficient to lift 300 will report to HQ, 2/5 Bn at 1100 hrs 28 Feb.
3. Any tps who cannot be lifted in this tpt will be attached to 2/6 Bn, who are located 4000<sup>X</sup> along BENINA RD and on right side of rd.
4. Coy at BEDA FORM will remain there until relieved by 2/6 Bn.
5. Div have asked authority to move 2/6 Bn to BEDA FORM (less one coy at BARCE).
6. The convoy will meet a guide at AHUM to lead them fwd.
7. Bn recce party will act as guides into new location.
8. No move fwd of AHUM before 1800 hrs. S.O. may time move to avoid long halt on way. If halted all vehicles will be dispersed 400<sup>X</sup> apart.
9. BN will occupy a reserve posn.
10. There is no other tpt available at present. The tp carrying tpt is to report back to its HQ after troops debuss on night 28 Feb/1 Mar.
11. Any surplus tps, other than Coy at BEDA FORM, may be ferried fwd by unit tpt after the BN has moved into new location.

DISTRIBUTION :

Copy No	1	2/5 Bn.
	2	2/6 Bn.
	3	2/7 Bn.
	4	Comd
	5	B.M.
	6	S.O.
	7	File
	8 - 10	War Diary

*A. Brock*  
Major,  
Bde Major, 17 Aust Inf Bde

APPENDIX I.

Action of 2/5 Bn across WADI DERBA during advance of  
17 ARSB Inf Bde from DERBA.

The decision to cross WADI DERBA in spite of the fact that no possible crossing place had been found for MT was based on the following factors :-

- (a) Two Coys, A and C, were already across; and owing to the difficult nature of the wadi crossing, it would have taken at least four hours for any support to have reached them had it become necessary. Furthermore, intercommunication with them was, in the absence of W/T, virtually impossible. The WADI DERBA in this area, and lower down, would be better described as a canyon.
- (b) From previous experience it was considered that, should the enemy be encountered in force, the Bn would at least be able to hold its own, even without its MT and arty or MG support.
- (c) If a crossing did exist it would be possibly be defended, and the quickest way to open it up would be from across the wadi by a flank and/or rear attack.

As it was known that the enemy was withdrawing, stiff opposition was not expected, and it was felt that the Bn could carry out, without MT or outside support, the role ordered by the Bde. The question of abandoning it did not therefore arise.

All Bn MT, one Bty 2/5 Fd Regt, and one Coy Cheshire Bn were left dispersed SOUTH of Wadi at about 213543 under comd Major SELL. SELL was instructed to maintain touch with Bde and bring these troops across to join the Bn if a practicable crossing was discovered. The dismounted personnel crossed the wadi in square 2137 carrying Bren and A Tk guns and made a junction with C Coy on the road North of this without incident. A message was sent to A Coy still some four miles SWS of this position to follow and join the Bn, and the remainder with B Coy as Advance Gd, advanced Westward on the road to GIOVANNI BERTA.

At dusk the Bn reached a point on the road at 120436 west of WADI EL MFERID. It was proposed to continue in the dark to where a more defined crossing at 120430 was shown on a salvaged map. At this stage fire suddenly broke out about two miles ahead. This fire was fairly heavy, and from observation of tracer and lights was obviously being fired across the front of the Bn from right to left. In view of the fact that it would be quite dark in a few minutes and any rescue impossible, and also because the country was very broken and covered with fairly close scrub, it was decided to halt for the night and push on covered by fighting patrols at First Light.

It subsequently turned out that the fire observed was directed at 2/5 Bn Bren Carriers which had reached the crossing on which 2/5 Bn was being directed. At about 2300 hrs a verbal message "STOP", which had been received from Lieut LOWEN Bde L.O. by one of the Coys, was delivered to Bn HQ. This message caused disappointment. Had the Bn been in intercom with Bde HQ and able to inform them of the situation this order would probably have been varied.

A Coy joined the Bn about midnight. The night was very cold (surface ice on ground in morning) and without blankets greatcoats or jerkins there was little sleep.

During this day the Bn, less A and C Coys had marched 20 miles. For more than half this distance Bren and A Tk guns had been carried and a descent into and a climb out of WADI DERBA made - probably the hardest day's march achieved by any unit in the campaign.

At First Light in the morning fighting patrols sent fwd ascertained that enemy had withdrawn. A runner was sent back with this information, but it was realised that it would be many hrs before it was delivered. About dusk an order from Bde to withdraw back across the wadi was received, and the unit did this next morning.

The Bn could have maintained itself, and continued its advance North of the wadi as patrols had located large dumps of enemy rations and blankets, and water was available from springs. Unfortunately it was not possible to inform Bde of this in time.

(150) Lt-Col.  
Commanding 2/5 Bn AIF.



app 17 Bde ~~Feb 41~~ ~~at~~  
FEB 41

HQ 17 Aust Inf Bde.,  
2 Apr 41.

6 Aust Div

Report - Campaign in LIBYA.

Ref your letter of 22 Feb and our reply: dates of which and ref numbers of each cannot be given as they are not available.

The report has been written in four parts as follows :

- Battle of BARDIA.
- Battle of TOBRUCH.
- The Advance from DERNA.
- Occupation of Frontier Position.

The first was fwded while in the line and the others written while on leave. These are attached.

At the end of each operation COs were instructed to fwd their reports. These reports were based on their own work and reports from Coy Comdrs.

Immediately after operations of any importance I dictated notes to a clerk, which were filed until reports from the Comds arrived. That prevented the happenings of one day being confused with another.

In the event of any doubt, confusion or chance for inaccuracy, I personally interviewed individuals concerned in the particular action. Where any doubt of complete accuracy remained those references to a particular action were deleted.

When compiling the reports I did not have the complete files of messages etc with me. If there appeared to be the slightest doubt about the accuracy of time or incident the words "approximate" or "it appeared" are used.

The reports are submitted as completely accurate so far as it is humanly possible to have them.

I regret my inability to conform with the requirements of your letter of 22 Feb relative to form and scope of report. This is impossible. For instance -

1. The Battle of BARDIA, so far as 17 Bde was concerned, was mainly independent Coy actions co-ordinated by Bns and very often by Bde HQ. This applied also, to some degree, in other actions.
2. My inability to define requirements for the lay mind and a military record.
3. Brevity is a danger to stating the work of each unit fairly and accurately.
4. The necessity to compile an accurate and full report to combat the result of various lectures given on incomplete data.

*Stanley*  
Brig.,  
Comdg 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

Pbt 24 014  
Pbt 24 015  
x3  
A722

17 Bde Feb 41

17 AUST INF BDE.

THE ADVANCE FROM DERNA.

Immediately TOBRUCH fell on 22 Jan orders were issued to Bns and attached units to go into bivouac. Areas were delineated to permit each unit access to a strip of sand on the beach.

Prior to Tobruch Brig Comdg was ordered to study the map representation of the terrain about DERNA with the view of 17 Bde operating there. Orders were also given DADOS to provide 17 Bde with necessary equipment to make up shortages. However, on the afternoon of 21 Jan, Brig was informed that 19 Aust Inf Bde would be given the job. Beyond an experience of mild surprise on our part no reasons were given to commend the altered plans.

Two platoons from 17 Bde were ordered to accompany 19 Bde as far as AIN EL GAZALA to escort prisoners taken by that Bde, back to TOBRUCH. 2/7 Bn were ordered to comply. The fighting quality of this Bde appeared to be appreciated as a force, so small, took over the role of attached tps as experienced before. The last platoon was not returned until 29 Jan and both were engaged with a fwd Bn.

17 Bde was ordered to provide a Bn to guard some 25,000 prisoners and an underground magazine. 2/7 Bn were conveniently situated and took over these duties on 23 Jan until relieved by 2/2 Bn on 26 Jan. Every available man was used to feed and water the prisoners, which proved an exhausting job.

On 26 Jan Brig and I.O., under Div instructions, reported to G.O.C. and G.1 at A.L.G. near GAZALA and later were present at conference with G.O.C. XIII Corps (Lt-Gen R. O'Connor). The role given 17 Bde was to clean up an enemy force in vicinity of MACHILI. Arm'd Div was to close them within WADIS in which they were situated. Next day Brig, in company with G.1 (Col G. Vasey) and B.M., went fwd to HQ Arm'd Div to find that enemy had slipped through the net and were en route for EL FAIDIA. On return to TOBRUCH on 26 Jan the Bde was found moving out. A mis-conception of requirements at Div HQ, in the absence of G.O.C. and G.1, was responsible for the unexpected move. The Bde bivouacked on the Rd that night and, on 27 Jan, went into bivouac at AIN EL GAZALA. The area had been reced the day before by Brig and I.O., which placed units comfortably in this delightful area.

A special recce party, covering representation of all units, moved out, at approximately 1100 hrs on 28 Jan to establish a recce camp near MACHILI. The route led past Div HQ. Brig called for further instructions. The general scheme had changed and 17 Bde was required to take over a line to the left of 19 Bde area at DERNA, including that held by 2/4 Bn. 16 Aust Inf Bde would continue with the initial idea and be prepared to advance WEST from MACHILI.

The special recce party, less those required for recce of new area, were returned to camp and C.Os. instructed to rendezvous 2 miles EAST of 19 Bde HQ (Kilo 31) at 1630 hrs. Brig and B.M. moved ahead to get general dispositions and plan. C.Os. were met at dark and instructed to report to HQ 19 Bde at 0800 hrs on 29 Jan where guides would be provided.

On 28 Jan Major S.H.W.C. Porter took over command 2/6 Bn and Lt-Col A.H.L. Godfrey also left to take command 17 Bde Tng Bn.

Arrangements were completed for 2/2 Fd Regt, 2/5 Bn and 2/6 Bn to move fwd on 29 Jan. The front taken over by 17 Bde included the area occupied by 2/4 Bn, thence WEST along WADI DERNA (2/5 Bn Sector), and from there at a right angle, the new area to be taken over by 2/6 Bn from 12037 2 - ELUET GRAB (211295), 2/7 Bn in reserve in an area WEST of MARTUBA. The general plan for dispositions of fwd Bns was based on defended localities occupied by Coys.

Some confusion existed on the rd during the move fwd caused by outside tpt breaking into the column and an unexpected halt by the Arty (leading) along the rd. It was dark when both 2/5 and 2/6 Bns arrived, but the recce parties sent ahead were able to guide Coys to their areas and the relief, and new line, was completed, and occupied, before First Light 30 Jan. 2/7 Bn moved on 30 Jan and were in position by 1600 hrs.

Some alterations were made to the general dispositions on 30 Jan to meet the eventuality of a fwd move which covered the following :

2/5 Bn. Two fwd Coys, occupying the NORTH bank of WADI DERNA, were moved to occupy positions on Rd DERNA - GIOVANNI BERTA. A Coy, right, to occupy some high ground and G Coy, left, to a point directly opposite inter-Bn bdy. C Coy was to clear WADI to the left by fighting patrols. The moves were carried out at night without incident.

2/6 Bn. (a) D Coy (reserve) to move fwd, WEST, along WADI DERNA to seek and secure a crossing. The move commenced at 1400 hrs and covered approximately 5000 yds fwd of the line before dark and a further 3000 yds during the night. No contact was made with enemy nor was a crossing found.

(b) A and C Coys patrolled the extensive minefield in front of 2/6 Bn. Lanes cleared by Engineers were marked and new ones made and marked. Special attention was paid to the left flank and a good lane was cleared opposite WADI HESKIA.

At approximately 2230 hrs on 30 Jan orders arrived from Div, per Capt Vial, for an advance next day. 19 Bde were to move on to DERNA and 17 Bde, astride WADI DERNA, towards GIOVANNI BERTA. The work already done proved to be of the utmost importance.

The general plan provided for 2/5 right, on NORTH SIDE of WADI DERNA, 2/6 left on SOUTH of WADI; some concern was felt for 2/5 Bn, if a crossing for vehicles and guns could not be found. Air photos were called for, and D Coy 2/6 Bn was maintained on its advance along the WADI searching for a crossing.

In view of the problem created by the WADI, a force, each 2/5 and 2/6 was created. To each was attached a bty of 2/2 Rd Regt (in support) and a Coy Cheshire Bn (under command). 2/6 Bn had also under comd 1 sec 2/2 Rd Coy and 2 Pls 17 Aust A Tk Coy.

Orders were written out during the night and Bn Comds met at a co-ordinating conference at 0800 hrs 31 Jan. Zero hour was fixed at 1010 hrs.

Coys of 2/6 Bn (less D Coy) moved across their wide front, under cover, to their left flank to take up their axis of advance through the minefield and along a track parallel to and SOUTH of WADI DERNA.

At 1700 hrs 2/6 had reached the track junc with the new MARTUBA - GIOVANNI BERTA Rd. This was slightly ahead of objective but the ground was more suitable.

2/5 Bn, less its two Coys across WADI DERNA, closed to its left flank and moved in the same direction as 2/6. No crossing could be found by our Engineers or Inf, so King decided to cross on foot and leave his guns and vehicles to follow later if a crossing could be found.

Air photos arrived at approx 1330 hrs and were rushed to the Engrs, to whom had already been sent an enemy map showing crossings. These all proved to be camel tracks useless for transport.

2/7, in reserve, moved behind 2/6 Bn and, after a march of 20½ miles dug in in rear of that Bn. Bde HQ was established at Pl53379 and, late in the afternoon, Brig noted a track across the WADI, ahead of 2/6 Bn lines, was shown on the map more strongly than others. Porter was ordered to send his carriers fwd to investigate and, if possible, to establish a bridgehead. Lieut Warfe moved ahead before dusk. He encountered strong resistance from A Tk and machine gun fire at short range. Noting a depression ahead, this officer again demonstrated his courage, dash and quick thinking.

Instead of turning he led his carriers fwd to cover, and worked his own vehicle into a position to give fire cover as the rest got clear. Only one man was wounded.

The position of 2/5 across the WADI, without blankets or greatcoats, and all transport unable to cross, caused anxiety. 2/7 Bn were then ordered, at 2200 hrs, to move to the WADI bank near Bde HQ, to provide a chain of men to get rations and water across next morning should the necessity arise. This demanded a night move by compass of 5½ miles. The country was rocky, traversed by WADIS, and intersected with mine fields. The Bn moved at 0130 hrs and were in position at 0400 hrs.

At 1700 hrs Lieut Lowen, L.O., was sent across the wadi to contact King. He was unable to find HQ, but located two Coys and left his message. He returned at 0230 hrs after traversing most frightful country.

Porter desired to attack that night, but, after conference with C.O. 2/2 Fd Regt and Porter, Brig considered it unwise, but ordered an attack after First Light. The chief reason was the inability of Arty to register before daylight.

The outline plan for this attack provided for one Coy to attack from a shallow Wadi on the right flank of the enemy, while one Coy gave covering fire from good ground to the front of the enemy. This Coy also covered F.O.O. Carriers were to demonstrate on enemy's left flank to draw fire. A system of light signals for arty co-operation was evolved. The enemy offered some resistance until the attacking Coy advanced when they retired. A Coy exploited the opposite side of the WADI and captured over 350 prisoners. A crossing, however, had not been found and, at about midday 1 Feb, Div ordered the withdrawal of 2/5 Bn. The country was so rough that they did not complete their move until the afternoon of 2 Feb.

The action of 2/6 Bn, with the long approach march in rough and unknown country at night, was carried out excellently. The role of 17 Bde that day was to exploit to a line most of which they already held.

Brig saw G.I at Div HQ on the afternoon of 1 Feb relative to the further advance on 2 Feb. The advance was to be via FORT ELUET EL NOEL to GIOVANNI BERTA.

At approx 1700 hrs G.II, in conference with CRA, suggested a move to the left with our CAV supported by guns, to outflank the enemy. The ground was considered to be impassable to AFVs by CO 11 Hussars and OC Sqn Div Cav. CRA was anxious to employ his guns and, as there were sufficient targets, this offer was readily accepted and a conference with him arranged at 0800 hrs next morning.

Close liaison had been maintained between Brig and C.O. 11 Hussars over the preceding two days. The latter loaned an armoured Wireless Set with personnel for ready passing of information. This was supplemented by daily visits by CO. Our own experiences, the work of 11 Hussars and our own Cav indicated strongly the possibility of the enemy vacating his dangerous flank positions on the road SOUTH of GIOVANNI BERTA. It was considered he would do so on the night of 1/2 Feb.

A conference of COs (including Arty, Cheshire MG Bn and "J" Bty) was held by Brig at HQ 2/7 Bn at 2000 hrs 1 Feb, when orders were issued. The outline plan was :-

2/7 Bn supported by 2/2 Fd Regt and with 1 Coy Cheshires, 2 Tps "J" Bty and 2 Pls 17 Bde A Tk Coy to move at 0800 hrs to Assembly Area in sq 9643 for the attack.

2/6 Bn to move along the new Rd to a position to cover the left flank of 2/7 Bn, supported by 1 bty 2/3 Fd Regt, plus 1 Coy Cheshires and 1 Tp "J" Bty.

Sqn Div Cav to protect the same flank to the rear of position taken up by 2/6 Bn.

O.C. Sqn Div Cav conferred with Brig at 0700 hrs 2 Feb and passed latest information, 11 Hussars passed latest information by wireless at 0730 hrs, both of which indicated no enemy movement within the FORT. At 0900 hrs C.O. 11 Hussars personally confirmed this.

0800 hrs (approx) CRA called and was given all information. It was agreed that his medium arty would neutralize two points held by the enemy, until the day before, SOUTH of the FORT, and he would harass movement just SOUTH of GIOVANNI BERTA; but fire on the FORT itself would be the task of our own supporting arty only and other arty would NOT shoot on this target.

It was estimated that Zero would not be before 1500 hrs.

These arrangements nullified the suggestion that a properly prepared barrage would be developed for First Light on 3 Feb. We felt certain that the enemy had gone during the night.

2/7 Bn moved at 0800 hrs on 2 Feb across rough and rocky country on a compass bearing. They were on a suitable F.U.P. at approx 1200 hrs, which they reported by wireless in code. Walker was then ordered to send fwd a strong patrol to test whether or not the FORT was occupied. On receipt of this order he was already arranging such action.

At approx 1130 hrs G.I advised that work was reported on the A Tk ditch WEST of GIOVANNI BERTA and 17 Bde would, after the capture of the FORT, move across country to the WEST of the Tank obstacle and hold that area, facing the Town.

Adv Bde HQ was established, under cover of 2/6 Bn, within a mile of the stone wall of the FORT at approx 1215 hrs. Shortly afterwards Walker's patrol, supported by carriers, moved fwd. No resistance was encountered and the FORT was occupied forthwith; which was approximately 1315 hrs.

Brig Comdg conferred with C.O. 2/2 Fd Regt and B.M. at the inner entrance of the FORT. The party met at approx 1400 hrs, when it was reported that an Arab informed an officer of 2/2 Fd Regt that the enemy had vacated GIOVANNI BERTA during the night.

Div HQ was advised of the capture of the FORT, the latest situation, and asked to stop arty fire on the Rd to GIOVANNI BERTA.

The plan evolved and put into execution at once was :-

1. 2/7 Bn to provide a Sec of Carriers, attached to which was a tp of A Tk guns from "J" Bty.  
Task: Ascertain if GIOVANNI BERTA was occupied by the enemy.
2. 2/7 Bn to re-organize and push on towards GIOVANNI BERTA to a point approx 4 miles ahead of FORT.
3. 2/6 Bn to re-organize and enter the FORT pending further orders.
4. Arty in support, and other arms under comd, to re-organize and join either 2/6 or 2/7 columns to which they were attached.

While making the above plan one of our planes machine gunned our tps in the FORT and Brigadier's group in conference. No casualties were inflicted.

At 1440 hrs an FOO belonging to a British Med Regt reported that his Regt was due to open a concentration on the FORT at 1500 hrs, but he hoped his message by wireless would cancel the shoot. A special signal, repeated in vital parts, was sent to Div to stop all arty fire except that which we controlled. It would appear that some misunderstanding arose wherein it was definitely understood that regts, other than 2/2 Fd Regt and 1 Bty 2/3 Fd Regt, would NOT fire on the FORT. Nothing could be done to get tps clear from the narrow passes within the FORT should the shoot take place. Fortunately the messages got through.

At about 1445 hrs two officers from Div Cav arrived as they had intercepted an earlier message to their O.C. They were ordered to proceed to GIOVANNI BERTA and assist our carriers if the need arose.

Lieut Walker, 2/7 Bn, reported his occupation of the Town at 1520 and the absence of the enemy. The Cav arrived in the Town shortly afterwards.

Further instructions were issued at once, as follows:

1. 2/7 Group to proceed and clear the town by some 2000 yds. They would deploy and cover Rds leading to DERNA.
2. 2/6 Group to follow, clear the town, and cover Rds leading to the town from the WEST.
3. 2/5 Bn to proceed, when tpt was available, and bivouac short of the town.
4. Cheshire Regt to provide guards within the town.
5. Arty to select areas on the high ground SOUTH of the town to cover dispositions.
6. Town out of bounds.

Brig Comdg, accompanied by C.O. 2/2 Fd Regt, CO Cheshires, and O.C. "J" Bty, plus tps from Cheshire Regt for guard duties, proceeded at once to the TOWN where the surrender was accepted from local officials at approx 1615 hrs.

2/7 were in position before dark and 2/6 completed their dispositions shortly after darkness fell. Bde HQ was established in the School.

Div Cav Sqn were ordered to proceed beyond A Tk ditch and examine, en route, a Fort. O.C. reported mine fields and the Rd blown at the Tank ditch; also the country was impassable just off the Rd. He had also tapped the telephone wires and had raised BENGASI. He was ordered to cut the wires.

The Arabs had created havoc by indiscriminate looting and the local Italians were in a state of fear. Steps were taken to alleviate the position and special guards placed over stocks of wine and flour.

The outstanding work worthy of mention covered :

1. Artillery : Before the advance of the reconnoitring patrols of 2/7 Bn on the FORT, the arty was deployed. The rapidity by which they re-organized to the line of march was exceptionally good.
2. Div Cav : Their work was consistently good, particularly fwd of GIOVANNI BERTA.
3. 2/7 Bn : The Bn marched at least 24 miles, mostly off rds and across stony and rugged country. The previous day they had marched 8 miles and the day before 26 miles. Their feet and ankles were bruised and they marched with difficulty, but they refused all offers for a lift on odd vehicles.

During the march from ELUET NOEL to GIOVANNI BERTA the road was enclosed, particularly through the passes of the FORT. Dispersion was bad at some stages and, at the worst stage, a number of Italian planes flew over but did not pick up the column. It was then halted. The planes passed and bombed the rear areas.

At about 1900 hrs OC Sec 2/2 Fd Coy was ordered to examine the mine fields, if possible that night, or not later than First Light next morning. He was to produce a report not later than 0800 hrs next day on the condition of the destroyed Rd at the Tank Trap and the state of the ground off the Rd to the West of the ditch. He was to provide a recce party also to examine the rds leading to DERNA for mines.

O.C. Sqn Div Cav was ordered to maintain standing patrols at the Rd Block and to provide patrols to the WEST, up to 10 miles, starting before First Light.

At approx 2000 hrs Capt T. Williams, Div L.O., arrived with a verbal warning order to move early next morning. The bad state of 2/7 caused some concern. The latest report from 2/5 Bn, whose fwd elements were re-crossing the wadi from the North to the South, gave little prospect for them catching up. The Staff Captain had been ordered to contact Div to obtain M.T. to lift them forward. The effect on them of their period of exposure and their double move across the fearful WADI country was unknown. B Echelon and 2/2 Fd Amb were also in rear. Capt Williams was asked to submit to Div the following :

- (a) The Bde was prepared to move.

- (b) There was little prospect of concentrating all units before midday next day.
- (c) The state of 2/7 Bn was bad. The feet and ankles of the tps were badly knocked about and required immediate attention.
- (d) It was expected that 2/5 Bn would be knocked up.

Div Order was received by wireless about 1815 hrs but could not be deciphered as the distance caused a great number of mistakes. The written Order itself arrived at approx 0130 hrs 3 Feb. First Light was not earlier than 0700 hrs and the minefield had to be cleared.

The following is outline of order issued :

- (a) Engrs to press on with clearing a way through minefield and to effect a crossing over the A Tk ditch.
- (b) 2/6 Bn to move at 0730 hrs with attached tps and supporting arty, and to seek tracks off the Rd to facilitate rapidity of movement.
- (c) 2/7 Bn group to follow.
- (d) 2/5 Bn to be brought by M.T. to GIOVANNI BERTA and to follow on.
- (e) All to concentrate in vicinity of EL GHEGAB.
- (f) Sqn Div Cav to provide protective screen fwd.

Div Plan allowed for 19 Bde to move across the A Tk ditch at 1000 hrs. The obstacle, mines to be cleared, and time and space prevented its fulfilment. Brig Comdg 19 Bde sent fwd his sec of Engrs to assist in fixing a crossing which the Engrs estimated could NOT be done before 0900 hrs.

2/6 Bn cleared the ditch with its inf and moved on. Its first vehicles crossed at 0845 hrs and the new position was occupied at 1100 hrs; a march of approx 16/18 miles. Progress off the Rd could not be made and no tracks could be found.

As soon as the heavier vehicles and guns commenced to cross the obstacle great difficulty was experienced. A bad jam was caused by some A.A. guns rushing into the column at the crossing itself. Until it was widened progress was slow.

2/7 Bn were ordered to move with inf, and its tpt to follow. 2/5 Bn, which arrived between 1100 and 1200 hrs, were ordered to do the same and Div was advised that there was no chance of the Bde Gp crossing before 1400 hrs. The last vehicle passed a little before 1500 hrs.

Div instructions then held 19 Bde for the day and ordered 17 Bde to cover both SOUTH and NORTH Rds leading to BARCE.

2/6 and 2/7 Bns continued to their original localities while 2/5 Bn was ordered to cover the NORTHERN Rd at ZAUJET TERT. Bde HQ was established at EL GHEGAB.

The 2/7 Bn had covered, on foot, over 70 miles in about as many hours. It had deployed for battle and most of the march was across extremely rough country. The tps had refused offers of a lift until C.O. ordered them to embus in vehicles returned by 2/2 Rd Regt for that purpose. The feet and ankles of the tps were badly bruised and their sox were worn out. This was due to the abnormal conditions of the country and the result was entirely different from normal troubles caused by bad sox or ill fitting boots. Men, with badly chafed legs, were seen marching without their trousers, despite the very cold wind. Their spirit was magnificent. C.O. 2/7 Bn had instituted a system of Coy medical orderlies under the guidance of M.O. Their chief duty was "care of feet" and the results throughout their days of training had been very good. During the period of operations advantage was taken of every halt for foot attention. Feet were plastered and ankles strapped, which eased conditions.

During the afternoon Div instructions called for placing a Bn next day at SLONTA, on the SOUTH Rd, and another at LUIGI de SAVOIA on the NORTH Rd.

The outline plan for moves on 4 Feb covered :  
 2/6 Bn with attached units and 1 Bty 2/2 Fd Regt  
 in support to SLONTA.  
 2/5 Bn with similar support to CIRENE. This  
 alteration was made to cover lateral Rd CIRENE-EL FAIDIA.  
 2/7 Bn to EL FAIDIA.  
 Bde HQ to EL FAIDIA.  
 2/6 Bn moved at First Light on MT provided by Div  
 and were in their new position at 0830 hrs, a journey of some  
 25 miles.

2/7 Bn were lifted in M.T. loaned by 2/2 Fd Regt.  
 Their Start Time was later than 2/6 Bn and they were in position  
 at approx noon.

2/5 Bn moved on foot.

At 0645 hrs 4 Feb Brig conferred with C.O. 2/2 Fd  
 Regt, B.M., S.C., and Supply Officer, and evolved a plan,  
 remarkable in its similarity with that issued by XIII Corps, to  
 push on in pursuit of the enemy. Everything indicated a rapid  
 withdrawal of enemy forces to BENGASI, or beyond. The notes  
 for this Plan are filed.

Brig arrived at Div HQ at 0910 to submit plan for  
 approval and found Brig 19 Bde in conference with G.I to fulfil  
 the same role. Brig 17 Bde offered, and provided, every  
 assistance possible - i.e. collection and despatch of A.T.  
 personnel, A.A. guns, and clearing the Rd of abandoned enemy  
 vehicles.

A sense of real disappointment was felt and expressed  
 at missing this opportunity, particularly as fwd elements of  
 17 Bde were approx 1/3 of the way nearer BARCE than other tps  
 and sufficient tpt was in our hands to lift two Bns at once.

The Bde remained in its present positions until  
 6 Feb. The main duties covered the protection of Italian  
 settlers from Arabs who were armed and engaged in looting. The  
 weather was cold and wet, but the green field and foliage had a  
 remarkable influence in uplifting the spirits of the tps.

On 6 Feb Div ordered a Bn to BARCE. The 2/6 Bn  
 was instructed to comply and tpt from our own resources lifted  
 them. What little information was available about the Rd was  
 inaccurate. Porter bivouacked for the night at the head of  
 the pass and moved his tps by foot over the escarpment at dawn  
 on 7 Feb and sent his tpt by the side pass. It was impossible  
 to take the main rd which had been blown by the enemy. 2/6 Bn  
 moved into the Barracks and provided a Coy for the protection  
 of the Town and guards over essential points and services. They  
 were so engaged until Bde HQ moved to the Frontier.

At 1420 hrs on 6 Feb an officer arrived from Div  
 with instructions for the Bde Gp, less 2/6 Bn, to move to SOLLUCH  
 preceded by a recce party to discover a way via el REGIMA.  
 Transport was NOT available so the Bde depended upon its own  
 resources.

C.O. 2/7 Bn was ordered, at 1445 hrs, to move to  
 TECNIS. Additional tpt was obtained from 2/5 Bn to lift them.  
 2/7 Bn had already helped 2/6 Bn by loaning 30 cwt vehicles. The  
 Bn moved at 1600 hrs and covered the ~~47~~ 47 miles before halting  
 for the night. The weather was very wet and cold. 2/5 Bn  
 remained at CIRENE pending further orders.

The move was controlled by Div, who issued a march  
 table. Arty and supporting units moved independently and  
 left our command.

Bde HQ moved at First Light 7 Feb and Brig and B.M.  
 picked up 2/7 Bn in their bivouac area. An officer was met  
 with instructions from Div to bivouac and seek areas for other  
 tps too, SOUTH of BARCE. This was due to the now impassable  
 state of rds.

The way was through a detour of 11 miles of sodden  
 country. The Med Arty led the march and turned the road into  
 a quagmire. The Arty was 9 hours in moving through, followed  
 by Cheshires and other odd units. No move could be undertaken  
 by Bde HQ, 2/7 Bn and 2/2 Fd Regt that night. Adv Bde HQ was  
 established at the foot of the pass.

*Note.*

*Brig 17 Bde.  
 informed G.O.C.  
 6 Sub. Div.  
 on afternoon  
 7 Feb. 3 that  
 through ca-  
 bination &  
 crippled feet  
 2/7 Bn could  
 not be lifted  
 more without  
 24 hrs rest.  
 J. G. Mackay  
 Major-General*



The move of units through the Pass commenced shortly after First Light 8 Feb. Bde HQ was through at 1310 hrs, but 2/7 Bn did not clear until just on dark. 2/2 Fd Regt was unable to negotiate the mud. At approx 1000 hrs L.O. from Div arrived with orders for 17 Bde to be in BENGASI area that afternoon. Mud and distance made this impossible.

The 2/7 Bn vehicles, loaned to assist 2/6 Bn, were sent on 7 Feb to 2/5 Bn to lift 2 Coys on 8 Feb. These Coys entered the pass about midday and were held up by the mud during the night. They were unable to clear the pass until late afternoon of 9 Feb.

On 8 Feb quarters for Bde were found in the Barracks, which were in a filthy condition. 2/6 Bn was already there and most of 2/7 Bn were in by nightfall; 2/5 Bn (2 Coys) arrived at dusk next day, 9 Feb.

The Hospital within the Barracks, controlled by Italian M.Os., contained a number of wounded. Protection for them was provided and supplies of rations obtained.

2/5 Bn, less two Coys, remained at CIRENE on protective duties until Bde HQ moved fwd on 16 Feb. 2/7 Bn provided patrols throughout the district of BARCE during the same period, while 2/6 Bn controlled the TOWN and provided necessary help for "Cyrforce" now established at BARCE, including the removal of Lt-Gen Wilson from his mud-bound car in the Pass.

Tractors were obtained locally and within 48 hours all bogged vehicles had been removed from the Pass. Pioneer Pls, 2/6 and 2/7 Bns, were loaned to the Engrs to open the main rd. Traffic Control Posts, linked by phone, were established and traffic soon flowed normally. The district was soon pacified and trading and normal conditions were established.

*Stan Savage*  
Brig,  
Comdg. 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

APPENDIX I.

Action of 2/5 Bn across WADI DERNA during advance of  
17 Aust Inf Bde from DERNA.

The decision to cross WADI DERNA in spite of the fact that no possible crossing place had been found for MT was based on the following factors :-

- (a) Two Coys, A and C, were already across; and owing to the difficult nature of the wadi crossing, it would have taken at least four hours for any support to have reached them had it become necessary. Furthermore, intercommunication with them was, in the absence of W/T, virtually impossible. The WADI DERNA in this area, and lower down, would be better described as a canyon.
- (b) From previous experience it was considered that, should the enemy be encountered in force, the bn would at least be able to hold its own, even without its MT and arty or MG support.
- (c) If a crossing did exist it would ~~be~~ possibly ~~be~~ defended, and the quickest way to open it up would be from across the wadi by a flank and/or rear attack.
- (d) As it was known that the enemy was withdrawing, stiff opposition was not expected, and it was felt that the bn could carry out, without MT or outside support, the role ordered by Bde. The question of abandoning it did not therefore arise.

All Bn MT, one Bty 2/2 Fd Regt, and one Coy Cheshire Bn were left dispersed SOUTH of Wadi at about 213343 under comd Major SELL. SELL was instructed to maintain touch with Bde and bring these troops across to join the Bn if a practicable crossing was discovered. The dismounted personnel crossed the Wadi in square 2137 carrying Bren and A Tk guns and made a junc with C Coy on the road North of this without incident. A message was sent to A Coy still some four miles ENE of this position to follow and join the Bn, and the remainder with B Coy as Advance Gd, advanced Westward on the road to GIOVANNI BERTA.

At dusk the Bn reached a point on the road at 130436 west of WADI EL MFERID. It was proposed to continue in the dark to where a more defined crossing at 100430 was shown on a salvaged map. At this stage fire suddenly broke out about two miles ahead. This fire was fairly heavy, and from observation of tracer and lights was obviously being fired across the front of the Bn from right to left. In view of the fact that it would be quite dark in a few minutes and any recce impossible, and also because the country was very broken and covered with fairly close scrub, it was decided to halt for the night and push on covered by fighting patrols at First Light.

It subsequently turned out that the fire observed was directed at 2/6 Bn Bren Carriers which had reached the crossing on which 2/5 Bn was being directed. At about 2300 hrs a verbal message "STOP", which had been received from Lieut LOWEN Bde L.O. by one of the Coys, was delivered to Bn HQ. This message caused disappointment. Had the Bn been in intercomm with Bde HQ and able to inform them of the situation this order would probably have been varied.

A Coy joined the Bn about midnight. The night was bitterly cold (surface ice on ground in morning) and without blankets greatcoats or jerkins there was little sleep.

During this day the Bn, less A and C Coys had marched 20 miles. For more than half this distance Bren and A Tk guns had been carried and a descent into and a climb out of WADI DERNA made - probably the hardest day's march achieved by any unit in the campaign.

At First Light in the morning fighting patrols sent fwd ascertained that enemy had withdrawn. A runner was sent back with this information, but it was realised that it would be many hrs before it was delivered. About dusk an order from Bde to withdraw back across the wadi was received, and the unit did this next morning.

The Bn could have maintained itself and continued its advance North of the Wadi as patrols had located large dumps of enemy rations and blankets, and water was available from springs. Unfortunately it was not possible to inform Bde of this in time.

(Sgd) Lt-Col.,  
(R. King) Commanding 2/5 Bn AIF.

App 17 Bde wa  
Jan 41

BATTLE OF TOBRUCH.

Maps : TOBRUCH red overprint  
TOBRUCH composite sheet.

Report of 17 Aust Inf Bde.

By nightfall 5 Jan all units were assembled in Bivouac Areas on the ground over which they fought at BARDIA. Under instructions all tps shaved and cleaned their clothing and equipment next day.

Salvage was commenced at once and units were given areas in which to work. This occupied the tps until our departure for TOBRUCH area.

Major I.R. Campbell assumed temporary command of 2/5 Bn on 7 Jan.

Under Div orders the Bde moved from its Bivouac Area to the TOBRUCH area on 9 Jan. The bulk of the journey was done at night and all units were met by guides and were in their allotted areas before midnight.

The first task was to comb Wadis and coastal belt for escaping enemy elements. A number of prisoners were taken.

C.Os. were ordered to carry out recce as follows :

- (a) The defensive line as selected by Div and their place in the dispositions as outlined by Bde.
- (b) The sectors held by 16 and 19 Aust Inf Bdes.

On the afternoon and night of 15/16 Jan 17 Aust Inf Bde relieved 19 Aust Inf Bde. Instead of 3 Bns fwd we placed 2/5 and 2/7 fwd, 2/6 in reserve area between grids 431 - 424 and 414 - 417. On the 2/7 Bn front references given for Coy localities were incorrect up to 1000 yds. These were corrected and checked by arty survey. Some confusion was caused in the relief by guides from 2/8 Bn being mis-directed. This was straightened out by our Coy Comdr picking up the telephone wire leading to their fwd HQ.

On 16 Jan Major R. King relieved Major Campbell and assumed command of 2/5 Bn as Lt-Col.

During this period conferences were held by Div HQ on the subject of the attack on TOBRUCH.

The role of 17 Aust Inf Bde was as follows :-

- (a) 1 Bn to be provided for the initial break through and advance, in a central position, to old Rd BARDIA, the objective of 16 Aust Inf Bde. At the suggestion of Brig Comdg 17 Aust Inf Bde they were placed under command 16 Aust Inf Bde.
- (b) 17 Aust Inf Bde less 2/6 Bn would demonstrate by fire at 0540 hrs on D1 and fire Italian flares to be provided by Div (The truck broke down and they did not reach position).
- (c) 2/7 Bn to enter perimeter at Post R67 on 2/1 Bn clearing that point. On 2/1 Bn reaching objective 2/7 Bn to relieve them at earliest. On completion of this relief 2/6 Bn to revert to command 17 Aust Inf Bde.
- (d) 17 Aust Inf Bde to exploit NORTH across Rd DERNA to heads of WADIS.

Orders were issued and conferences with COs settled plans and possible future roles. Brig Comdg gave his appreciation and outline plans to meet all conceivable probable roles as the battle developed.

Each Bn had under command 1 Coy Cheshires MG Bn and 1 Tp "P" Bty. 2/6 Bn had in addition 1 Pla 17 Aust A Tk Coy.

On 19 Jan C.O. 2/6 Bn was instructed to report to HQ 16 Aust Inf Bde for orders, which provided for them coming under comd 16 Aust Inf Bde at 1600 hrs 20 Jan at an assembly area.

17 Aust Inf Bde arranged for MT for this move which was carried out in a blinding sandstorm. The Bn arrived in good order and settled down until 0130 hrs 21 Jan when their movements conformed to instructions 16 Aust Inf Bde.

2/5 and 2/7 Bns patrolled vigorously the enemy line opposite their Sectors. CRE had provided instruction in "delousing" mines and booby traps for Pioneer Pl personnel. This instruction was passed to patrols, who soon became adept at this work.

In order to provide for demonstration by fire and the subsequent, and more important role of 2/7 Bn, and possible roles of 2/5 Bn, the following orders were issued to each for night 20/21 Jan :

1. 2/5 Bn :

- (a) Bn, (less 1 Coy and 1 Pl, 1 Pl Cheshires and 2 dets Mortars) to deploy in an area SOUTH of Rd BARDIA. This would admit of rapid movement if required and save time.
- (b) 1 Coy and 1 Pl, 1 Pl Cheshires, and 2 dets Mortars (Italian mortars).  
 Role : To prevent enemy advancing, or escaping, EAST of WADI VEDDAN, and to demonstrate by fire on enemy positions. The deployment of this force was as follows : C Coy (Capt W.B. Griffiths) to remain in position at 42654224.  
VEDDAN Det, consisting of 1 Pl Inf, 1 Pl Cheshires and 2 dets mortars, under comd Lieut A.C. Bennett, on spur of WADI VEDDAN at 42444244. To impress the enemy that we are holding the area in strength. Bennett, though subjected to heavy shellfire carried out his duties with energy and imagination.

2. 2/7 Bns

- (a) During the night of 20/21 2/7 Bn provided secs of Cheshires and Mortar dets (Italian mortars) to demonstrate against the enemy. Their role was to engage the enemy vigorously and mislead him in the same way. Their action was NOT to prejudice their more important role of relieving 2/1 Bn and exploiting to heads of WADIS.
- (b) In order to facilitate the movements of the 2/7 Bn their coys were concentrated, in deployment, on the left flank. An Assembly, or Checking, area was selected to bring them in line with their point of entry to the perimeter. This provided for an approach march on a bearing of 360°.
- (c) During the night 20/21 Jan a patrol was instructed to clear mines and booby traps from area about point of entry to perimeter. Over 20 were deloused and, on examination after the tps had passed, only one had been missed.
- (d) In view of the tasks set 2/8 Engrs it did not appear that they would have time to reach point of entry for 2/7 Bn at the time 2/7 Bn was due to cross. In order to obviate tps waiting within the area of the enemy arty defensive fire special steps were taken for a rapid crossing. Seventeen short ladders were carried and 2 men per Pl carried a pick, head up, between haversack and back. Some Bangalore torpedoes were also carried. The supposition proved correct, but the crossing of the anti tank ditch and wire was carried out expeditiously. 2/6 Bn completed feeding and final details to move at 0300 hrs to fwd Assembly area. With them was 1 Pl only 2 Cheshires; the Coy, less 1 Pl, was left to come on with 2/7 Bn in order to reduce congestion at the point of entry. Carriers were provided for 1 FOO, each bty 2/2 Fd Regt. Each had a tp at call.  
 The Battle Assembly Area was reached at 0545 hrs, the F.U.P. at 0600 hrs each on time, and the move to the S.L. proceeded on time and in good order.

The general plan was for the 2/3 Bn to break through and turn left; the 2/1 Bn to turn right and move along line of fwd posts; 2/2 Bn right to line of gun positions and 2/6 Bn between 2/1 and 2/2 Bns.

Some congestion due to enemy action was evident as 2/2 Bn cleared the gap. Keeping in touch with rear elements 2/2 Bn, 2/6 Bn crossed S.L. at 0710 hrs - 15 minutes behind time. Enemy shelling had increased and the Bn was fortunate in avoiding casualties from shellfire. On reaching edge of enemy defences an A Tk gun Porte struck a mine, or booby trap, and 6 men were wounded.

Once through the wire the advance was speeded up. Visibility was bad due to bursting shells and dust. Odd prisoners were captured at various posts, but no resistance was met until Post 62 was reached. 2/1 Bn was moving along the Perimeter apparently without opposition also; the same applied to 2/2 on left.

At Rd June SOUTH of Post 62, direction was changed half left and the Bn moved astride the Rd towards its objective.

Post 62 offered resistance, despite some bombing, Bren gun fire, and a few shells from an "I" tank. Leaving a party to deal with the Post, the advance continued. Lieut F.D. Clarke, Comd Pioneer Pl, who remained with the party, prepared a mixture of crude oil and kerosene from quantities about the Post. This was poured through the ventilators and ignited. The Post Comdr, who had called on his men to die fighting, changed his mind and came out. 11 enemy were killed and 35 captured.

The advance to RD BARDIA continued without incident until, at that point, severe shelling from coastal bty called a halt for half an hour. The efforts of FOO quietened them sufficiently for the Bn to cross and reach its objective.

After recce 3 Coys were disposed fwd with 1 Coy in reserve. Definite instructions from Brig Comdg 17 Aust Inf Bde denied exploitation down the Wadis, but they were covered by Mortars and MGs. Special attention was required to MG and Inf dispositions on left flank to support 19 Aust Inf Bde. Godfrey's dispositions answered all requirements.

2/7 Bn moved to its Assembly Area, which was being desultorily shelled, on time. Visibility was reduced to 50 yds by ground fog and dust. This denied the C.O. (Lt-Col T.G. Walker ED) seeing the progress of the battle on which his next move depended. He moved fwd to ascertain the situation under cover of an Advance Gd and the Bn reached its point of entry at Post R65 accurately just as rear elements of 2/6 Bn passed; and according to plan. The leading Coy was across and moving fwd to relieve 2/1 Bn at 0825 hrs.

The Bn moved fwd under spasmodic shellfire and, at 1030 hrs Bn HQ was established, temporarily, at Post 75, which was prepared for Bde HQ. B Coy relieved 2/1 Bn at, and including, Posts 81 - 85. Walker then moved fwd with O.C. MG Coy to observe the situation and at 1135 hrs advised Bde that exploitation had been completed as per O.O. Both tanks and barrage ceased to operate fwd of point of relief. Another Arty plan, chiefly by observation, was employed to cover the fwd move.

Some light resistance was met at Post Z78 by A Coy who soon reported 250 prisoners taken here and in the near vicinity. Light shelling continued during the afternoon and 1 offr and 8 ORs were wounded. At 1338 hrs Bn HQ was established at 422422.

Bde HQ was organized into echelons to move fwd as early as possible. The Staff Capt (Capt. J.A. Bishop) moved fwd early to place A.D.S. At 1025 hrs Brig, I.O., and Sig Officer moved with first echelon. This move commenced immediately advice was received from Walker that he was moving fwd to relieve 2/1 Bn. The route taken was WEST of and clear of Rd BARDIA which had not then been cleared by our tps.

Fwd Bde HQ was opened at Post 75 at 1120 hrs, but there was no sign of Div line which was advised would be there. B.M. was ordered to remain at Rear HQ to endeavour to get the line through, but it was not forthcoming, despite several and varying statements, until approximately 1700 hrs.

2/5 Bn, less special dets, had completed its assembly SOUTH of Rd BARDIA before First Light, by which time tps had been given a hot meal and were ready to move as required.

At 0545 the whole Bn was shelled, chiefly by heavy calibre shells, which continued during the period the Bn was outside the Perimeter.

Before leaving Rear HQ Brig Comdg instructed 2/5 Bn to send fwd a recce party to select a position in area bounded by Posts 65 and 75 in order to get the Bn within the Perimeter as early as possible. No move was to take place until ordered as the objectives had not been taken, nor the 2/1 Bn relieved, when this work was put in hand. When fwd Bde HQ arrived at Post 75 the 2/5 Bn party had completed their job and had returned to their Headquarters. A message was sent by 2/7 wireless to Bde Rear HQ at 1155 hrs to move fwd 2/5 Bn. Unfortunately Bde Sig Officer had his vehicles stranded on the way fwd and the message could not be relayed. Capt Bishop returned to Rear Bde HQ to hasten the establishment of Div line and, in passing advised C.O. 2/5 Bn (Lt-Col R. King) of the move, which he received at 1315 hrs.

The fwd move began at once and the movement was shelled continuously, but owing to excellent dispersion only two casualties were suffered (1 died later).

At approx 1400 hrs L.O. 19 Aust Inf Bde arrived and asked the whereabouts of 2/5 Bn, who had been ordered to report at noon to come under comd. No knowledge of this was then known. L.O. 2/5 Bn was despatched to change the direction of march and pass new orders to King.

The Bn was then some two miles away, their resolute and steady march was excellent. They changed direction without any bunching until forced to close to cross the perimeter when they again dispersed. King reported to 19 Bde at 1530 hrs and was instructed to occupy position across the WADI heads from WADI EL CHELEILA - WADI EL NEDURA, which was occupied by about 1800 hrs. Immediately this was completed the Bn reverted to its own comd. Actually Godfrey gave all the protection which was required and the move of 2/5 Bn was not justified by what they could do from the position into which they were ordered.

On the afternoon of 20 Jan Brig Comdg called a conference of Bn Comds, C.O. 2 Cheshires and O.C. P. Bty. He stated his appreciation of the battle, probable roles envisaged and gave an outline plan to meet the situations.

It was then felt that, if the enemy fought, 19 Bde may find trouble on their left flank which might pin them down. If so our flank provided defiladed cover to move towards TOBRUCH and thereby ease the situation. To do so called for silencing guns in area below the escarpment and at FORT CHETEITA.

C.O. 2/6 Bn was ordered to study this possibility, select a good Coy Comdr, for the advance under cover of the lip of WADI, to outflank the guns and capture them. Capt J.G. Rowan was selected and his Coy was kept in reserve when exploitation was complete.

The enemy was lamentable in his effort, which was anything but a fight, but left flank 19 Bde ran in to trouble from tanks dug in as fortresses, but whose action was not sufficiently strong to stop the advance.

Both enemy Inf and guns in the WADIS and FORT CHETEITA were causing considerable annoyance. It was therefore determined to clean them up at First Light on 22 Jan and at the same time to establish a reserve of 1 Bn for eventualities. Walker was instructed to recce Godfrey's area before dark with the view of taking it over if required.

After conferring with B.M. and C.O. 2/2 Fd Regt, Brig called a conference of Bn Comds at 1945 hrs when the following tasks were laid down. Capt J.G. Rowan 2/6 Bn was in attendance.

- (a) 2/7 Bn to take over and add, to its present front, the line held by 2/6 Bn. Relief to commence at moonrise, 0130 hrs.
- (b) 2/6 Bn, less C Coy, to move into Bde reserve at 420422.

- (c) 2/7 Bn to hold its original front with one Coy and the added 2/6 Bn front with another Coy. Two Coys to be available for clearing enemy from Wadis at First Light.
- (d) C Coy 2/6 Bn to capture FORT CHETEITA; 2/5 Bn to protect flanks by patrolling Wadis both sides of the advance.
- (e) Support :  
 1 Bty at call for 2/7 Bn clearing WADI from which enemy arty fired during the day.  
 1 Bty at call O.C. C Coy 2/6 Bn for attack on FORT CHETEITA.

At approximately 0215 hrs 22 Jan Div L.O. arrived with orders to hand over 2/6 Bn to 19 Aust Inf Bde. They were ordered to be at SIDI MAHMUD at 0900 hrs and C.O. to report to 19 Aust Inf Bde HQ at 0830 hrs. At 0500 hrs tps were fed and the Bn moved at 0615 hrs.

The plan for clearing Wadis by 2/7 Bn provided for A Coy to clear area WADI ZEITUN and C Coy WEST of the wire to Sq H19425, and between Rd BARDIA and COAST. Coys moved on the defended side of WADI to catch the enemy garrisons on rear. Each had some carriers, a 3" Mortar and a Pl of MGs from Cheshire Bn. C Coy, who anticipated meeting enemy arty, had an FOO in a carrier with a Bty at call. C.O. 2/2 Fd Regt moved his btys to suitable positions during the night.

At approximately 2330 CRA telephoned and stated that among the Artillery Shoots arranged for early morning was included FORT MERSA CHETEITA. Our plan for attacking this FORT was explained and it was requested that fire by Arty, outside our control, should NOT be put down in this area. Troops were then moving into position and contact with them may be impossible in that rough country during the hours of darkness. We further were confident of our ability to capture the objective suggested, as the attack was supported by a bty of fd guns. It was agreed that our plan should stand.

A Coy 2/7 Bn reported position POST, TRIG 94, at 0930 hrs and the intention to move 1 Pl fwd, with 2 Pls in reserve at Rd junc 42684232.

The enemy Area Comd was captured at POST 94 and, as a WADI, 300 ft deep, had to be negotiated to reach further posts, the Coy Comdr (Capt J.R. Savige) ordered the enemy Comdr to telephone other Post Comdrs to come in with their garrisons and surrender. They did so. The order was "Mano in alto the b - s (the latter being a favourite Australian expression).

C Coy 2/7 Bn reported reaching Pt 42184277 and were moving WEST to WADI in sq 420427. Prisoners 120. They cleared the rest of their area. Bn HQ was established at POST Z 93, at 1620 hrs, and active participation for 2/7 Bn ended.

C Coy 2/6 Bn, with Carriers, Mortar det a Pl, MGs Cheshire Bn, and accompanied by an FOO. in a carrier moved off from their R.V. at 0515 hrs. The going was rough and a considerable distance had to be traversed in the dark. The Coy crossed S.L. at 0630 hrs and moved a further 2500 yds to halt, while O.C. with FOO went fwd on recce. Recce parties were ordered to come fwd to Pt 74 in sq 418428 for their tasks.

Whilst making this recce Rowan noticed a white flag in the vicinity of the FORT around which was a considerable movement of tps. This was reported by wireless, carried by FOO, at 0800 hrs.

Rowan proceeded with his plan to attack and instructions were issued for NO firing by supporting arms unless tps were fired on by enemy. The attack developed and the enemy surrendered. Some 50 officers and 400 ORs were captured. Approximately one third were naval officers and ratings. Among the guns were 4 six inch and 6 three inch naval guns. The enemy, who had NOT fired from the Fort since nightfall 20 Jan, had devoted his attention to destroying all he could within the Fort. Success was signalled by Rowan in a message timed 0900 hours.

At approximately 0800 hrs 2/5 Bn was ordered to fan out to the WEST and to take up a line covering WADI UMM ES SCIAUSC to protect the right flank of 19 Aust Inf Bde who were timed to advance at 0930 hrs. C Coy 2/6 Bn was ordered to prolong the flank to the Coast on their capture of the FORT.

Godfrey received his orders at 0245 hrs 22 Jan per L.O. to conform to Div instructions. The Bn, less C Coy, moved to SIDI MAHMUD while Godfrey reported to HQ 19 Bde at 0830 and attended a conference of Bn Comds. He was ordered to remain at SIDI MAHMUD, with a possible future role of following up 2/8 Bn, which he was instructed to do at 0945. The Bn moved at 1015 hrs. At 1215 hrs, moving along the foot of the escarpment through a heavy sandstorm, the Bn reached line of Rd FORT PILASTRINO - FORT AIRENTE. No news had been received of 2/8 Bn, whom the 2/6 were supporting, so Lieut A.R. Benns, and 1 Sgt were sent fwd to contact the fwd troops, which they were unable to do. Some ten minutes after their return Godfrey contacted an officer 2/8 Bn and learned that they had not yet completed their recce and were still in his rear. 2/6 Bn halted and made way for 2/8, who ~~passed~~ passed at 1315 hrs. 2/6 followed, then in support at 1400 hrs. As no resistance was met 2/6 Bn halted and took up a defensive position North of Rd DERNA while 2/8 combed the WADIS. At 1500 hrs Div L.O. informed Godfrey that TOBRUCH had fallen and 2/6 would now take up defensive position SOUTH of Rd DERNA across escarpment to FORT PILASTRINO. The Bn retraced its steps and took up position as ordered. The Bn marched 17 miles on 21 Jan and a further 16 miles on 22 Jan. They had practically no rest on the two previous nights and nothing of interest on 22 Jan, which found them footsore and weary. During the morning of 23 Jan B Coy was employed in clearing out the buildings and dugouts once used by 22 Italian Corps. On reverting to 17 Aust Inf Bde they were placed in the FORT captured by C Coy, where they rested and recuperated.

During the advance under command 16 Bde 2/6 captured 281 prisoners and with 19 Bde approx 1500 were picked up.

This report would be incomplete without drawing attention to the disabilities caused by placing Bns of one Bde under command of another. While stating an opinion honestly there is NOT any desire to criticize, but rather an attempt to avoid a recurrence of practices which are believed to have been unjustified by events and which resulted only in exhausted units and a weakened Bde.

At BARDIA 2/5 Bn, who had been engaged strenuously for 3 days and 2 nights, was placed under command of 19 Aust Inf Bde late on the day of 4 Jan. The Unit, less 2 Coys, was exhausted, and the two rested Coys were withdrawn while moving to an attack without reference to Brig Comdg. The Bn was used to establish a solid base from which the attack was launched by 19 Bde. That base had been provided specially by 17 Bde, was known to exist, and the rest of the Bn appeared to be unnecessarily superimposed on it. The second role was to follow the attacking tps through to the objective on the morning of 5 Jan. On reaching that point 2/5 Bn was released but were considered to be too exhausted to march back to their bivouac area before late afternoon. The withdrawal of the two coys, moving to the attack, forced the use of 2/7 Bn, depleted in numbers and extremely tired, to keep the fight going. They were unable to make further headway and, had the 17 Bde been called on for further attacks on 5 Jan, it is extremely unlikely that they would have been able to do so. Careful planning to create reserves; and the use of fresh tps for important work, were nullified.

The move of 2/5 Bn at TOBRUCH provided no more than had been voluntarily given by the Bde. The importance of covering the flank of 19 Bde was realised before the battle, and adequate means taken to ensure it being done. These precautions were passed to Brig Comdg 19 Bde before the battle. The transfer of 2/5 Bn gave no further security and obtained nothing beyond an added distance to a long march and the loss of an important reserve to 17 Bde.



The careful forethought and reliefs, followed by active operations on the night of 21/22 Jan provided for a Bn in reserve for future eventualities. The 2/6 Bn had hardly been placed in its reserve position when it was transferred to 19 Bde. Their role was to support, but they found themselves being supported unconsciously by the unit they were to support. Their moves and dispositions provided for nothing further than had been done, and was further carried out by 17 Bde, less 2/6 Bn. The total result was the unnecessary exhaustion of a unit which may have been needed to stiffen its Brigade should its services have been required for a further important role.

It is therefore submitted, most respectfully, that careful consideration be given before a unit is lost to a Bde, particularly as that Bde may be called upon to meet unseen eventualities.

Units of this Bde were engaged in every phase of the battle. The contemptible effort of the enemy is indicated by our total casualties reaching only 1 officer and 22 ORs made up as follows :

	Offrs	O.Rs.
2/5 Bn	-	4
2/6 Bn	-	10
2/7 Bn	1	8
Total	1	22

Note : All casualties were wounded, only one of whom, 2/5 Bn, died of wounds.

An examination of the enemy posts found weapons pointing away from the attack and little, if any, sign of ammunition expenditure.

Although much excellent work was done by officers and Troops, Brig and C.Os. find it impossible to recommend any awards. Prisoners are estimated as follows :

2/6 Bn	2200
2/7 Bn	500
<u>Total</u>	<u>2700</u>

A number of field guns and Naval guns were picked up within our area during the advance.

Note on Bde. Commander's remarks on pp. 6 & 7

1. These criticisms are made after the event.
2. Bardia. During Jan. 4 the fighting in E & S.E. Brig.,  
portions of position were undertaken chiefly under Comdg 17 Aust Inf Bde.  
Bde arrangements & results were not conclusive enough. At close of Jan. 4 Div. decided to carry out a fresh organised attack on Jan. 5 to clear the whole thing up. 19 Inf. Bde. was ordered to carry out the attack & 2/5 Bn. were put under command. The attack was successful & the whole Bardia fortress conquered by 11.00 hrs. on Jan. 5. Casualties were very light & captures were thousands of prisoners & scores of guns. No doubt other units besides 2/5 Bn. & 2/7 Bn. were very tired & temporarily exhausted. Surely this is a small price to pay for reducing Bardia & capturing 45,000 prisoners in about 60 hours.
3. Tobruk. The object before 6 Troop. Div. was to defeat the garrison & capture Tobruk. Progress of 19 Troop. Bde. was highly successful & progress to be made was more so. Units of 17 Bde., first 2/5 Bn. & later 2/6 Bn. were put under command 19 Bde. to give Comdr. 19 Bde. more freedom of scope & reflection of exploitation if he so desired. The battle was over by noon on Jan. 22 & casualties remarkably light. The eventualities at that time were clear & not impossible & Troop. Div. were used to win the battle, not to be spared from exhaustion. J. J. Murray, Major

17 AUST INF BDE.

Occupation of FRONTIER Position.

At approx midday 15 Feb G.1 telephoned Warning Order to the effect that 17 Bde would be required for further operations on the line of CYRENAICA - TRIPOLITANIA FRONTIER and one Bn would be required to report to GOC 7 Armd Div within a few days.

2/7 Bn was the only Bn free to move at short notice and Lt-Col T.G. Walker was ordered to contact GOC Armd Div at earliest. He proceeded at 1400 hrs on 15 Feb and returned at approx 1700 hrs 16 Feb.

It was also anticipated that another Bn would be placed in an area SOUTH of BENGASI.

At approx 1900 hrs 16 Feb Bde was instructed by Div to order selected Bn to proceed to fwd area next day and come under comd 7 Armd Div, temporarily. 2/7 Bn was ordered to move at 0700 hrs on 17 Feb.

Brig and B.M. reconnoitred area for 2/5 Bn, which was selected to move SOUTH of BENGASI. The triangle bounded by el GUARSCIA - GHEMINES - SOLUCH was investigated as it was anticipated that a Coy would be required fwd at either, or both, the latter towns.

At 0200 hrs 18 Feb orders were received from Corps HQ instructing 17 Aust Inf Bde to take over fwd area from 7 Armd Div, whose HQ was some 7 kilos NORTH of AGEDABIA, at 1600 hrs that day.

At 0730 hrs COs 2/5 and 2/6 Bns were in conference with Brig Comdg. They were informed of the move of Bde HQ and that they, both, would come under direct orders 6 Aust Div, to whom they would report for orders. 2/5 Bn would move to area SOUTH of BENGASI and 2/6 Bn to OBERDAN, with 1 Coy on duty at BARCE. Adv Bde HQ moved at 0730 hrs and remainder at 0930 hrs.

2/7 Bn, who had gone fwd on 17 Feb, reported to Armd Div. The latter knew they were to be relieved, but nothing about the details of relief appears to have been known. In view of the order to return MT, on which personnel of 2/7 were carried, Walker pushed on towards the Support Gp and bivouacked off the Rd at kilo 835. A conference was called by GOC, which Walker attended and, beyond the fact that 2/7 Bn and KDGs would remain in the area, little else was known. Details covering departure of 7 Armd Div on the 18 Feb were fixed.

1 Aust Corps orders covered the following points :-

- (1) The adoption of an attitude which must be in the main defensive for the present.
- (2) To stop an enemy advance WEST of EL AGHEILA from direction of SIRTE.
- (3) The following under comd 17 Aust Inf Bde -
  - 17 Aust Inf Bde (less 2/5, 2/6 Bns, who will come directly under 6 Aust Div).
  - 2/3 Fd Regt (less 1 Bty, which was to be sent fwd later)
  - KDGs (Armd Cars) incl RAF Armd Car Sqn.
  - 1 Lt AA Bty
  - 155 Lt AA Bty
  - ADW 7 Armd Div
  - Free French (one Bn of two coys)
  - Det Flt 208 Sqn RAF.
  - 1 Fd Coy RAE
- (4) Comd - Brig S.G. SAVIGE, and will come under HQ 1 Aust Corps direct.
- (5) Force to occupy defensive line to cover AGEDABIA, but it is NOT desired to push Inf WEST of EL AGHEILA.
- (6) Patrolling to be carried out by A/Cs to W. & S.W. of EL AGHEILA.

The Force was ordered to relieve 7 Armd Div at 1600 hrs 18 Feb, up to which hour the latter were responsible.

HQ 7 Armd Div was located at 1445 hrs, but they had gone at 1300 hrs. Although locations of other units making up 17 Aust Inf Bde Gp were given in Corps Orders, few of them were then there.

Adv Bde HQ moved fwd and contacted CO 2/7 Bn and later Brig Comdg Support Gp, 7 Armd Div, who was moving out that evening.

The plan adopted by 7 Armd Div for a defensive line was in the proximity of MELAH en NOGRU (Kilo 836). 1 Aust Corps had suggested the existance of a suitable line near MARSA el BREGA. Next morning this was reconnoitred and found to be more suitable for Inf than that determined by Armd Div. The observation was good, the front was covered by a Marsh (which gave a good Tank obstacle), and the Rd, which was the most likely approach for the enemy, could be covered. This was adopted.

CO KDGs did not know he was under comd 17 Bde Gp until Brig produced 1 Aust Corps Order. To avoid any chance of deception CO asked if he may type a copy of this order. After that relations were cordial.

2/7 Bn (less 1 Coy on duty at AGEDABIA) bivouacked in an area behind Support Gp. Walker was ordered to take up a defensive line about MARSA el BREGA to cover the Rd. While reconnoitring that point, Brig's recce party was subjected to an intense enemy air attack, which was defeated by four planes of RAAF Sqn. Bde HQ was established off the Rd near Kilo 836.

An immediate search was made for unlocated units, which were mostly gathered during the next three days.

During the first few days enemy air ~~activity~~ activity had been intense. The main Rd, MARSA el BREGA and AGEDABIA were the main targets. Attacks were delivered by up to 25 machines and at levels of 100 feet.

It soon appeared that the main Rd provided targets for the enemy as much MT movement took place by day. This was forced upon units by F.S.D. being situated at MAGRUM, necessitating a "turn round" of 160 miles. Immediate steps were taken to remedy this by establishing a C.P. just NORTH of KILO 836. A track was marked by petrol drums to give an axis of supply to KDGs on the left, while 2/7 Bn used the main Rd. The plan evolved was to deliver rations for two days while the C.P. was being established. One day's supply was then established and picked up by units after dark. Some hours later rations for next day were delivered by A.S.C. This provided for rations for one day only being in the fwd area.

Orders were then issued that MT would not use the Rd by day except on special duty. A beneficial effect to us and a retarding one to the enemy was experienced at once.

Standing Orders for near HQ were issued on 20 Feb as a guide to combat enemy air activity.

Special plans for fwd areas were promulgated which covered main points as :-

1. Wide dispersion for tps in camouflaged slit trenches.
2. MT dispersed, up to 1 mile, from ~~tp areas~~ tp areas. Vehicles at 500x spacing with vital parts dug in. Special attention to camouflage. Later instructions provided for permanent rigging of camouflage nets on supports as a cover under which MT was placed. Vehicles were run in and out of this cover and were never attacked after the introduction of this system. Nets supported by vehicles do not camouflage, but when suspended separately & irregularly, and further camouflaged by local material, proved an inability on the part of enemy airmen to pick them up. MT area was linked to Bn HQ by phone. No disabilities were experienced by distance.
3. All tracks leading to Unit tpt areas were sited as circuit rds leading from Main Rd and one way traffic maintained. Enemy airmen searched these circuits for unit localities without locating them.
4. Low flying enemy aircraft to be engaged with all weapons available; anti tank rifles included.

The immediate and permanent results were to force enemy planes to higher levels, two EA shot down by Inf fire and not a single casualty among fwd tps.

On 23 Feb Op Instr No. 19 was issued. This was based on various recces carried out by KDGs and 2/7 Bn on outline plan issued by Bde. The defensive plan and necessary co-ordination was laid down.

At 1530 hrs 20 Feb 3 enemy armd cars and one truck, carrying Breda guns, attacked patrol from "C" Sqn KDGs, based on el AGHEILA, 22 miles W. of that point. One A/C (enemy) was knocked out and reported to have 8 wheels. It was thought that this was a FIAT ANSALDO, 611, which carried 2 spare wheels, one either side, and slung low. At 1915 hrs our patrol was again fired on by a Breda gun 19 miles WEST of AGHEILA. Our A Tk Pl was due to reach AGEDABIA that night. They were ordered to report to OC "C" Sqn before First Light next day. They travelled the additional 70 miles and did so. Supplies of enemy mines were reported at AGEDABIA. Pioneer Pl 2/7 Bn were ordered to pick up 500 mines and deliver them to KDGs early next morning. They travelled approx 100 miles and did so by 0800 hrs, but no detonators were available. Special steps were taken to block rds and cover road blocks by fire.

It appears that our patrol moved WEST in its normal patrol across the border. One A/C was placed off the rd EAST of the border to provide cover, where it was ordered to remain. The other A/Cs finished their patrol and, while returning, overtook the enemy AFVs. They apparently came on to the rd in rear of our A/C used as a Standing Patrol. Our daily patrols on 21-23 Feb patrolled across the border up to 29 miles without locating enemy movement.

Air Tac/R reported on 21 Feb a column of 16 enemy MT 4 miles EAST RAS el AALI at 0800 hrs. At least 3 were 8 wheeled A/Cs and crews were wearing a bluish color uniform different from anything seen in Libya before.

During the first 7/8 days enemy air activity was intense and persistent. 17 EA were brought down or believed shot down. Among captured items were maps. One map provided immediate attention as a number of triangles were marked, the boldest at EL HAMMA, not shown on our maps. This locality was searched and a Landing Ground was found. This was rendered unfit by our Pioneer Pl, and a Coy of Free French placed there to guard it against air borne enemy. The L.G. at el AGHEILA was also rendered unfit for service. Another interesting peculiarity was the persistent attention paid by enemy planes to BREGA. In the bay were 2 small frigates and a one funnel steamer; all of which were sunk in shallow water or beached. No real reason for this attention was apparent. The following deductions were made :

- (1) There appears to be few or no Italian tps in the area.
- (2) German airmen are holding the frontier.
- (3) It appears that AFVs are likely to be German.
- (4) The reported arrival of German tps is a fact. We may anticipate action as follows :
  - (a) German tps and AFVs may be landed at MARSALA el BREGA, RAS el AALI or other sheltered points on the coast.
  - (b) German tps may be landed on some, or all, of the available landing grounds.
  - (c) German and Italian force may be sent fwd by Rd.

The greatest difficulty at this period was the inaccuracy of our maps. Many rds shown did not exist and those existing were not shown on the map. OC 2/3 Fd Coy was instructed to roughly survey rds and produce a map. CO KDGs was instructed to do likewise in the area fwd of our line. OC 2/7 Fd Coy was detailed to examine known local wells and search for other water supplies. A permanent and adequate supply was located some two kilos EAST of MARSALA el BREGA.

On 23 Feb enemy aircraft was intensively active over the whole area. They bombed and machine gunned Fwd and Rear Bde HQ, the L.G. at AGEDABIA, 2/3 Fd Regt, 2/7 Bn, and KDGs. Approx 25 aircraft were engaged. Among them were 2 four-engined bombers. Our Tac/R reported 4 enemy A/Cs, one with large gun mounted in front, facing EAST on our side of frontier. Strat/R reported 36 enemy planes on their rear L.Gs. and the following shipping in TRIPOLI Harbour: 3/10,000 tons; 9/500 tons; and 1/5,000 tons, together with 5 seaplanes. More shipping, including naval vessels, was reported later.

Feb 24 was a busy day. At 0842 hrs "C" Sqn KDGs reported they were attacked by 17 enemy AFVs at AGHEILA FORT two miles WEST of TOWN. This was later recognized to consist of 2 large tanks, 4/5 smaller tanks, 20/30 Combination M/Cs and 2/3 Diesel Tp carrying MT. At 1002 hrs KDGs reported enemy forming up 1 1/2 miles WEST of AGHEILA Fort with intention of retiring. At 1100 hrs they reported AGHEILA clear of enemy. In the meantime the following dispositions were ordered. OC Free French Coy at EL HAMMA to send an observation patrol, with 1 Inf A Tk gun, to ELUET HADDA to watch left flank. 2/3 Fd Regt to prepare to use guns against Tanks; Engineer parties in fwd area to create rd blocks with telegraph poles; 2/7 Bn to cover them with fire. 2/3 Fd Coy, less fwd elements, to occupy high ground CHORELAMAR and cover AGEDABIA; KDGs to prepare Breda AA guns to fire on tanks. 2/7 Bn to "Stand to".

Ultimately, by careful checking, the following appears to be the real happenings of the day.

"C" Sqn KDGs, strengthened by 1 Pl 17 Aust A Tk Coy under Lieut Rowley, operating from a base approx 6 miles EAST of AGHEILA was responsible for -

- (a) Patrolling fwd beyond the frontier.
- (b) Patrolling SOUTH to WADI el FAREGH.

The Frontier patrol had examined the rd on 23 Feb up to 29 miles WEST of the frontier without contacting the enemy. Next morning, 24 Feb, they moved out in the same direction with one A/C leading. Lieut Rowley went ahead of his tps in MT to collect water at the FORT, & was stopped by gunfire from an enemy Tank short of the FORT, after overtaking all A/Cs except the leading vehicle. One man was killed and Rowley and 2 ORs sought shelter until Rowley went fwd to what he apparently believed to be enemy prisoners, near a vehicle, in the hands of our people. He was captured by a German officer who was the only one seen of the enemy Tank crews. Together with Rowley were 3 prisoners from our leading A/C. The German officer then advanced to our truck near which the two surviving members of our A Tk Coy were sheltered. The German halted, as if he saw some movement, and returned. Rowley and 2 men KDGs were placed in a vehicle and a badly wounded trooper (KDG) abandoned. Our A/C was towed by an enemy vehicle and found later destroyed by fire. It was noted that enemy tps on motor cycles and in MT wore Italian uniform.

It would appear that the enemy followed our A/Cs on the previous evening, bivouacked in the FORT, and ambushed the leading elements of the Patrol as it moved out next morning.

At 1200 hrs 24 Feb 6 Aust Div took over from Corps and 17 Bde reverted to its own command. Details for further action were left pending confirmation by G.1 who was due at noon. The formation of a group to trap enemy elements was considered and, at the instigation of G.1, a section of 25 pdrs 2/3 Fd Regt was added.

Orders were then given to CO KDGs, COs 2/7 Bn and 2/3 Fd Regt as follows:

C Sqn KDG to create a strong patrol of A/Cs to which would be ~~attached~~ attached 2 Pls and 1 Sec Pioneers, 2/7 Bn, in MT provided by the unit, 1 Sec 25 pdrs and 2 Inf A Tk guns. Comdr - OC C Sqn KDGs. Role: Select a point on the road in the vicinity of the Frontier, which could be mined and covered by fire. From this point reconce patrols would operate and endeavour to entice enemy out.

The party moved out that night and selected a section of the rd running through a cutting. This had been mined some time before by the enemy at one pt and prepared for mining at other pts. Our Pioneers laid mines, for which we had now obtained detonators, in other suitable places. They remained there until the night of 28 Feb without locating the enemy.

Between 18 and 25 Feb KDGs had, on instruction, reconnoitred all rds between our line and the frontier, WADI FAREGH from the Frontier to AIN en NEGA, and the Rd SOUTH to MARADA.

Each day one, and sometimes two, Tac R was carried out and, every two days, a Strat R report was called for.

Strat R report for 24 Feb stated that 500 MT (enemy) were moving SOUTH from vicinity of MISURATA. On 26 Feb they were not seen, but on 28 Feb they were nearing the Frontier.

Div. Op Instr No. 28 of 26 Feb laid down present role of 17 Bde to be maintained but its front extended left to WADI FAREGH. 3 Armd Bde group to be responsible for protection of <sup>front</sup> approx 10 miles WEST of AGHEILA to the Frontier and the flank SOUTH of the WADI. Permission was granted to bring up 2/5 Bn, less 1 Coy at BEDA FOMM. Coys of Free French Force were transferred to 3 Armd Bde Gp. 1 Coy 2/5 Bn took over duties at AGEDABIA. All other tps forming part of original 17 Bde Gp reverted to Div Comd or came under comd 3 Armd Bde. Bty 2/3 Fd Regt was relieved by 2/1 Fd Regt of which 1 Bty supported 17 Bde.

On 28 Feb 2/5 Bn, less 1 Coy, were lifted by MT to the fwd area. A reserve position was taken up near Kilo 826.

Enemy air activities eased but, on 27 Feb, enemy air craft attacked Bde HQ and area of KDGs. At about 1030 hrs a heavy attack was made on our fwd special force and again in the afternoon. 3 A/Cs and 2 trucks were damaged and KDG elements suffered 9 casualties.

At about this date enemy had established a fwd L.G. at RAS LANUF.

On 3 Mar air attacks were made on Rear Bde HQ, AGEDABIA, and area occupied by KDGs.

One Tac R reported approx 300 MT, including AFVs, in the vicinity of the frontier and patrols from 3 Armd Bde saw enemy A/Cs South of WADI FAREGH.

2/5 Bn relieved 2/7 Bn in the fwd area on 4 March. <sup>Two</sup> ~~one~~ Coys 2/7 Bn remained to provide for 4 Coys in the fwd area.

Bde Op Instr No. 21, issued 5 Mar, provided for a special Tank Hunting party, 2/5 Bn, to move towards the Frontier, escorted by dets KDGs, on the evening 6 Mar. Their chief role was to obtain identifications and watch enemy movements. Lieut F.D.H. Wray Comd. The plan was submitted to Div on 2 Mar and an escort from KDGs was requested. CRE arranged for special explosives to be carried. The party returned at 1130 hrs 8 March.

The party was dropped between AGHEILA and the Frontier during the night 7 Mar by their escort. During 8 Mar an enemy force of 2 A/Cs, 3 small tanks and 1 truck was observed. This force moved across country and observed AGHEILA for about 20 minutes. They passed our party at a distance of 4 - 5 kilos. Enemy air activity of a protective nature, was continuous. Enemy tps movements under cover of a herd of camels was also noted. No identification was obtained.

Between 2 and 8 Mar a number of recces were carried out as follows :

- (a) To establish an outpost line fwd of BREGA to cover Rd, FDLs, and a fwd O.P. for arty. A line was established about 3 kilos fwd where an outpost line was established.
- (b) To discover a position suitable for Inf between B es SUERA and WADI FAREGH. After three recces by Brig a posn was selected following the S.E. folds of AGRUB-en-NEHEILA - BLEIDET et TARATIT.
- (c) The extent of SEBCHA es SEGHIRA and its value as a Tank obstacle. Brig & I.O. examined its E. and S. edges and personnel from 2/7 and 2/5 Bns its W. & N. edges.

17 Bde was relieved by 20 Aust Inf Bde on night of 9/10 March. Special maps showing Rds and Tracks, as they existed on the ground, were prepared. An appreciation of the situation was written by Brig Comdg 17 Bde for Brig Comdg 20 Bde and a recce of the whole area carried out by both Brigadiers on 9 March.

Whilst under direct comd of 6 Aust Div 2/5 Bn was moved on 20 Feb to area GARIUNES just South of BENGASI, with one Coy detached at BEDA FOMM on the battlefield area, and 2/6 Bn was moved on 19 Feb to OBERDAN and then on 23 Feb to BENGASI area, leaving one Coy for security duties at BARCE and one pl at MADDALENA to protect 2/2 AFW there. At BENGASI 2/6 Bn provided one Coy and one Pl for protection of local vulnerable points, whilst the remainder of the BN occupied the Eastern side of the perimeter defence of the city.

On 4 Mar a pl of 2/5 Bn was sent to escort 334 SENUSSI prisoners with approx 500 horses and camels from AGEDABIA to near BENGASI.

On 8 Mar details of 2/6 Bn at BARCE and MADDALENA were relieved by 2/13 Bn and they proceeded direct to TOBRUCH, followed the next day by the remainder of the Bn, where 2/6 Bn took over security duties from 2/4 Bn.

Following the relief of fwd units, the Bde (less 2/6 Bn) concentrated approx 20 kilos North of AGEDABIA during night 9/10 Mar and then moved on to TOBRUCH, staging night 10/11 Mar near TOCRA, and night 11/12 Mar outside DERNA. At TOBRUCH Bde HQ set up again at "Villa Delia" whilst 2/7 Bn re-occupied WADI ZEITUN sector. 2/5 Bn bivouacked nearby, less one Coy, which was stationed at DERNA and another Coy which joined 2/6 Bn for local security duties. Our first night here was interrupted by an air raid. At TOBRUCH 2/2 Fd Amb concentrated and came under comd 17 Bde as well as the newly formed 17 Bde Comp Coy AASC.

Whilst there CYRCOM instructed that our remaining 8 Bren Carriers were to be handed in.

On 17 Mar Comd TOBRUCH Sub-area asked for an escort to accompany a boatload of prisoners to ALEXANDRIA the next day. Lieut Wray and 10 ORs 2/5 Bn reported for duty and sailed during the morning, but, when a short distance off shore, the ship struck a mine with the unfortunate loss of a number of lives, including 5 men of 2/5 Bn.

On 17 Mar a message arrived from AIF HQ with orders to mobilize forthwith at MATRUH and to be prepared to move from there after refitting on or from 1200 hrs 22 Mar.

During 18 Mar 26 Aust Inf Bde arrived at TOBRUCH and took over security duties. 17 Bde moved on 19 Mar staging night 19/20 Mar at BUQ BUQ and arriving at MATRUH on 20 Mar.

During the next few days the Bde refitted in transport and received certain equipment and stores.

Here 2/2 Fd Coy, 2/8 Fd Coy, 2/2 Fd Pk Coy, 2/11 Bn, 2/7 Fd Amb and 2/1 Fd Hyg Sec joined the Bde Gp.

Movement Orders from GHQ ME arrived and the Bde Gp moved by road and rail from MERSA MATRUH to AMARIYA during 25-27 Mar.

*John ...*  
Brig.,  
Comdg 17 Aust. Inf. Bde.

APPENDIX I.

STATEMENT - LIBYAN CAMPAIGN.

29 Mar 41.

Brigadier Savige,  
17th Bde HQ.

Dear Sir,

The following statement is to acquaint you of what has been accomplished amongst the Brigade as from 1st Jan to 25th March.

Men served $\frac{1}{2}$ pint coffee	10,176
Gallons of coffee served	646
Lbs of cake distributed	250
Lbs of biscuits "	145
Sheets writing paper "	32,000
Envelopes "	9,500
Pairs of socks "	450

Besides above innumerable smaller things, tooth brushes, paste, razor blades, soaps, etc wherever needed.

Church Parades and Sing Songs have been held. Wireless program every available opportunity.

Each unit has been served equally and impartially.

Let me take this opportunity of again thanking you Sir for making my work so easy to perform by your thoughtfulness towards me.

God bless you with wisdom and strength and yours with comfort and protection.

I remain,  
Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd) G. S. Palmer

Salvation Army Representative.