

**AWM52**

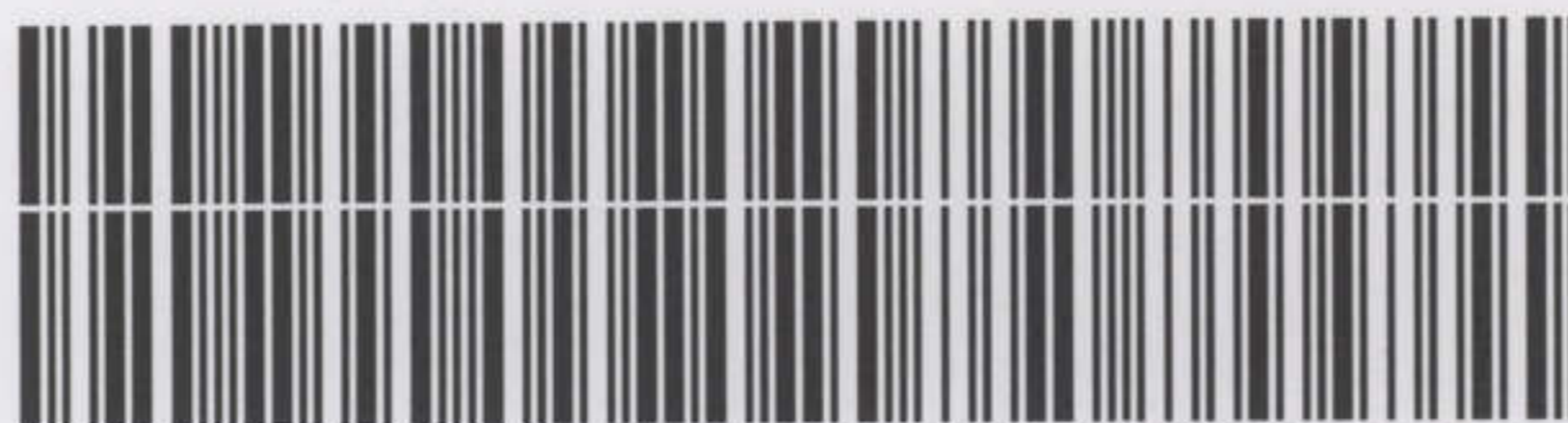
**2nd AIF (Australian Imperial Force) and CMF  
(Commonwealth Military Forces) unit war diaries,  
1939-45 War**

Miscellaneous - POW  
Independent Companies

**Item number: 25/3/1/5**

**Title: 1 Independent Company**

January and February 1942



AWM52-25/3/1/5

25/3/15

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES  
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

JANUARY &  
FEBRUARY 1942

ORIGINAL

I INDEPENDENT  
COMPANY

No. 1. Independent Coy., A.I.F.,  
20th Sept., 1945.

War Diary compiled from notes covering period  
21st January, 1942 to 2nd February, 1942.

At approximately 0710 hrs. on 21st January, 1942, planes were reported coming in from the North. All personnel were at or in the vicinity of their action stations. The planes were recognised as being Nipponese, about 60 in number, mostly bombers, dive-bombers and some Zeros. Their presence was immediately reported to H.Q., Rabaul. The attack commenced at 0718 hrs. by dive-bombing of buildings and gun positions on the aerodrome and low level attacks on the ridge running laterally with the western beach, where we had concealed gun positions. These attacks were simultaneous. They were met by brisk fire from all guns and one enemy plane left formation badly hit and made off in a north-westerly direction but crashed into the sea beyond Noosa Island.

After the first few minutes the Jap formation broke up in smaller groups and in some cases singly attacking by machine gun fire and bombing the hospital, dwellings, etc. indiscriminately.

The motor vessel "Induna Star", which had arrived in harbour immediately prior to the attack and was tied up at the main wharf, cast off her moorings and endeavoured to make for the comparative safety of the Albatross Channel and its adjacent islands. She was immediately singled out for attack by six planes and although the gun team under Sgt. Reed put up an heroic resistance the "Induna Star" was soon riddled with bullets and her steering gear out of control ran on a reef close to the beach about two miles south of Kavieng. A short account of the foregoing action is necessary here.

"Induna Star" cast her moorings at 0725 hrs. and headed south-west. The attack on her commenced at 0730 hrs. and continued until 0800 hrs. During this time she was exposed to the continuous fire from six planes. She was manned by the usual crew, Skipper Julius Lundin, a Chinese engineer and nine native boys. Of these, one was killed outright and two others wounded. The gun crew comprised Tpr. Anderson firing the gun, Tpr. Gulliford No. 2. on the gun, other personnel were Tpr. Tole, Sigs. Munro and Harrison, Ptes. Moffat and Carter and Cpl. Noonan. The gun was a Bren in an exposed position on the roof, to the rear of the wheel-house (the only position suitable for A.A. Anderson was first wounded by a bullet through his right elbow. He continued to fire and he was again severely wounded in the abdomen, but continued at his post until the "Induna Star" ran on the reef. Sig. Munro and Tpr. Anderson both died as a result of wounds and all other members of the crew, with the exception of Moffat and Carter, were also wounded.

When the "Induna Star" ran on the reef the Skipper and native crew abandoned her and while swimming to a nearby island, one of the crew was taken by a shark.

During the first few minutes of the bombing the Q.M. store at the aerodrome was wrecked, but not much other damage was done, except one hut suffered a direct hit by a bomb and fire broke out. The first attack eased off for a few minutes. At 0755 hrs. the military hospital was hit by a bomb, fortunately with no loss of life, as all patients and personnel were out in slit trenches, the worst cases of sickness were at the civilian hospital (under the care of Sister D. Mays) which fortunately had not been hit.

*Feb.*

By 0800 hrs. smoke was coming from the copra shed and as I had a small group of sigs. there with a 108 set for communication with an outpost on Salapu Island I dispatched Capt. Fraser to make a reconnaissance of that area. I was also temporarily out of communication with the aerodrome as the telephone wires had been cut by a bomb, and I dispatched Sgt. Maj. Ross Harvey by motor cycle to see if all was going well with Capt. Goode's platoon in defence there. At 0823 hrs. Sgt. Maj. Harvey returned, closely followed and being fired upon by a Jap plane. He reported all well and no casualties at the drome.

At 0820 hrs. the attack eased off and by this time we had accounted for two more planes, one crashing into the swampy area south west of the aerodrome and one crashing into the sea some distance out from the north beach east of the north west point of the island. The telephone systems had broken at 0825 hrs, Capt. Fraser not having returned, I left Lieut. Dixon in charge of H.Q. and moved out on a tour of the positions. I found both copra sheds burning and the sig. station destroyed and no sign of Capt. Fraser or the sigs, nor was the "Induna Star" visible from this point. I next visited the military hospital and while crossing from the copra shed to the hospital area I was machine gunned without effect by Jap planes. I found all well at the military hospital, the only casualty being one from Capt. Millican's platoon suffering from concussion.

I next visited Capt. Millican's platoon positions. Everything was going well and there were no more casualties. I next visited Sister May at the civilian hospital and discussed the possibility of shifting any badly wounded men down to the Catholic Mission at Lamacott. Permission to do this was obtained from the Roman Catholic fathers residing in Kavieng.

The time was now 0845 hrs. and the attack which had increased in tempo between 0830 hrs. and 0845 hrs. now began to ease off. All nip planes had flown off by 0850 hrs. By this time we had definitely accounted for one more plane which crashed into the sea out towards Salapu Island and many others were seen to be badly hit. The attack had all been low level and divebombing their planes offering good targets and the gun teams in all positions had kept up a constant fire at each attack.

At 0855 hrs. one float plane returned, flying at a low level along the water front. One of Capt. Millican's gun teams, situated on the ridge got in a good burst of M.G. fire the plane was plainly hit and immediately fled in a north-westerly direction. This was the end of the attack. Some bombs had been dropped in Chinatown but damage was slight. Capt. Goode while crossing the aerodrome had been hit by a piece of flying lime stone sustaining a badly bruised hip, the remainder of the casualties had been sustained by the "Induna Star" incident.

Capt. Fraser on reaching the sig. station at the wharf had found it demolished and the sigs. taking shelter some distance away. They reported the "Induna Star" incident and Capt. Fraser went along the beach to render assistance if possible to the personnel on board the "Induna Star". He was enabled to assist them ashore and take the wounded to the Platoon Aid Post and later to the civil hospital.

In the meantime the skipper of the "Induna Star" had got a canoe and reported to me at H.Q. by 0915 hrs. stating that the "Induna Star" was wrecked. I ordered him to go back and endeavour to get the ship going and bring her up to the wharf. I then had all possible details wirelessly to H.Q. Rabaul, including supposed loss of the "Induna Star" and claiming four planes. This claim was later confirmed, when the Japs landed at Kavieng they were looking for the crews of six planes and stated that we had accounted for seven planes. I went out to the aerodrome where salvaging operations from the wrecked Q.

*Jed.*

store were under way and Capt. Goode was having things put in order. By 0945 hrs. I was back at the civil hospital where the wounded had just arrived and Capt. Bristowe, ably assisted by Sister Maye, were commencing to operate. After consultation with them it was decided to send the seriously wounded down to the Lamacott Mission with Sister Maye in charge. This was accomplished by 1500 hrs. by car and truck. The attitude and actions of Sister Maye were at all times heroic and highly commendable.

I decided that in the case of an enemy landing, our positions in Kavieng would be untenable and that should a landing take place at Panopi Beach simultaneously with ones at the western beaches our positions would be a death trap, I decided to evacuate all but portion of Capt. Goode's platoon and certain essential personnel that day. By 1100 hrs. the skipper had managed to bring the "Induna Star" up to the Police wharf. She was in a badly leaking condition and the skipper did not consider her seaworthy. However I had a month's supply of rations loaded into her and ordered the skipper to take her round to Kaut Harbour, patch the holes and await my orders. The Chinese engineer deserted and could not be found. I ordered Capt. Fraser to take all superfluous H.Q. personnel by track and whale boat out to an established camp on the Sook River adjacent to the camp set up by the civil administration. I sent Capt. Millican and his platoon with the exception of some detailed to Panopi Beach, overland to an established camp, overlooking Kaut Harbour. In these camps there was a month's supply of food also two sections from the aerodrome under Lieut. Gibson were sent to Sook via Tomi. The above people with their gear and equipment had moved out of Kavieng by 1830 hrs on the 21st January.

Mr. Page, Sig. Officer, I instructed to shift our main wireless set out to a position of relative safety about half a mile south west of the aerodrome. This was to be my future H.Q. This was accomplished during the afternoon of the 21st. after having first notified our outposts at Buka and Manus of the days happenings. All personnel possible were put on to carting drinking water and supplies out to the aerodrome area.

Between 1900 and 2000 hrs. a message was received from H.Q. Rabaul stating that an enemy force of 1 aircraft carrier and six cruisers were in the vicinity of and in the waters north-west of Rabaul.

Europeans were evacuating and some Chinese but many Chinese were remaining and I did not feel justified in firing any portion of the town at this stage.

By 0800 hrs. on the morning of the 22nd January the sigs. had contacted Rabaul asking for further information. Rabaul replied that there was no information but that they would contact us later. They did not contact us and from that hour all communication from them ceased. All the 22nd was spent in preparing for enemy attack and getting supplies out on the tracks to our final rendezvous at Sook and Kaut should evacuation become necessary. Coy. Medical Aid posts also set up at Cockle Creek south west corner of Panopi and those wounded able to travel were sent there. At 2230 hrs. Mr. Doyle, plantation manager at Salapu from our outpost positions on Salapu Island reported in by motor boat that there was no visible sign of enemy naval or aircraft. At this time it was very dark and raining. I asked him to return to the outpost and as we were now out of W.T. contact with them that should they see Kavieng being attacked to make their way by boat to our camp at Kaut, which they later did. Lieut. Dixon, Dvr. Sibrai and two engineers and myself were now the only Army personnel left in Kavieng proper. Mr. Philip Levy, Harry Miller, Bill Attwood Mr. Livingstone and Roman Catholic fathers were the only European civilians left. I decided to stay the night with Mr. Levy

*J.L.*

Lieut. Dixon and party stayed at the Town Club (both close to the waterfront) with the intention of commencing demolitions on wharves etc. at 0400 on the 23rd. Mr. Dixon set a watch and went to bed at 2300 hrs.

Wednesday, 23rd January at 0305 hours I was awakened by noise at Saunder's wharf. Visibility was very poor and it was raining lightly. Mr. Levy switched on the house lights but immediately switched them off. Mr. Dixon's party saw the lights switched on and off and knew we were warned. It was the commencement of an enemy landing, made in darkness and without noise. Landing barges were reaching all western beaches at 0310 hrs. Very lights were being fired, followed by much shouting and shooting. By 0312 hours Mr. Levy's house was surrounded but we left it by car unmolested except for a few stray and ineffective shots. I picked up Mr. Harry Murray on the way out to the aerodrome. The enemy were by this time surging towards the aerodrome from the lower western beaches. I was met by Lieut. Burns, whose duty it was to blow the drome and supply dumps. I told him to do this immediately and then retire if possible. I drove to the end of the drome, waited 30 seconds and the drome and dumps were blown up at 0318 hours. Some of the enemy troops had actually penetrated on to the drome by this time. Unfortunately Capt. Goode received severe concussion when the drome was blown up but he with all remaining members of his platoon retired in good order towards Cackle Creek and sustained no further casualties.

I arrived at H.Q. at 0325 hrs. The W.T. equipment was then smashed as it was too heavy to carry, as was everything else of use to the enemy and we retired to the Cackle Creek rendezvous. By 0530 hrs. Lieut. Dixon and party had not arrived at the rendezvous. Reports showed that the landing at Panopi Beach had not been simultaneous with landings at the western beaches and this discrepancy in time had allowed our almost unimpeded retirement. The enemy had landed in force between 3,000 and 4,000 strong. Resistance at this stage was useless. At 0545 hours as Lieut. Dixon and party had not arrived I concluded that they were either killed, P.O.W.'s or had escaped down the coast road with Mr. Livingstone who was known to have followed that route. I decided to move out towards Sook, jungle travel was slow and the wounded impeded progress but by 1300 hours we had reached the edge of the more open country and as aircraft were constantly overhead I decided to camp until night. I sent back scouts who returned by 1800 hrs. stating that the enemy had reached Rockle Creek. We moved that night to the edge of the kunai plains, camped until 1200 hours on the 24th, then worked our way along the edge of the kunai plains until evening, when we crossed them and entered the dense jungle between it and Harker's Hut. It now became impossible to carry the wounded so they walked, which was very gallant on the part of Cpl. Noonan as he had bullet wounds through both legs. By 2330 hrs. we had arrived at a small clear knoll overlooking the river at Harker's Hut. It was very wet and dark and everyone was utterly weary. I sent Sgt. Roberts to recce. Harker's Hut. He did not return, so fearing an ambush I decided to camp.

At 0400 hrs. on the 25th sounds were heard from the direction of the river at Harker's Hut. Everyone stood to but it was Sgt. Roberts returning having been unable to find us on the previous night. He reported all clear. We then pushed on and were met at Harker's Hut by a party sent out by Capt. Fraser from Sook. The journey from Harker's hut to Sook had to be done in relays, part way by canoe. I went with the first party and arrived at Sook by 1600 hours. The rear party did not arrive until next day. Many were in a state of exhaustion as the hardships of the trail had been severe.

*JM*

I immediately reported to Moresby that myself and Coy., except for slight casualties were all O.K. and asked if relief would be possible. I received congratulations from Maj. Gen. Morriss and instructions to observe and report. I believed at this time that the "Induna Star" was unseaworthy and that we would not be able to make our withdrawal in her as previously planned, reference my appreciation and operation orders.

All day on the 26th we remained resting at Sook. A native police boy reported that Lieut. Dixon and party had left down the coast road.

On 27th Capt. Fraser and Sgt. Maj. Harvey while recceing down the Sook River met a party of natives with the Tomi luluai (an untrustworthy character) and were informed by them that Lieut. Dixon and party were P.O.W's at Kavieng. This was subsequently found to be correct. On the evening of the 27th Lieut. Dennis and Mr. Morell arrived from Kaut with the news that an enemy aircraft carrier was standing in the anchorage at Djowl Island and an enemy submarine was patrolling up the mouth of the Albatross Channell. The enemy obviously thought that we would head for Djowl Island (it was later confirmed that their Intell. Corps were of this opinion). They also said that the enemy were patrolling along a track from the north coast road to the southern shore of the island east of Kaut, thereby endeavouring to cut us off ~~and~~ from the eastern end of the island, also that the skipper of the "Induna Star" had deserted with the crew and that the "Induna Star" was on a mud bank in Kaut Harbour, but that in their opinion she could be made seaworthy. He also reported that malaria and diarrhoeia were bad in their camp. As this was also the case with us and also as some of the civilians were complaining that our proximity was a danger to them, I decided to move everyone to Kaut, try and refloat the "Induna Star" and make for New Britain where reports said our troops were still resisting the enemy. Failing this, we would blow up the "Induna Star" and make our way down to the Lelet Plateau where conditins would be healthier. As unquestionably our positions at Sook and Kaut would be discovered by the enemy in a few days I decided to move everyone to Kaut on the following day. I called Capt. Fraser and Capt. Goode apart and communicated this decision to them. They made no comment.

Capt. Fraser and Sgt. Maj. Harvey volunteered to take a party to try and rescue Lieut. Dixon's party. As the information regarding Mr. Dixon's party was contradictory, also even if they were P.O.W's the time taken to rescue them and return to Kaut would jeopardise the safety of the coy. I refused the request.

I visited the civilian camp and communicated my decision to Mr. McDonald and Mr. Levy, asking Mr. McDonald not to take any action or destroy the wireless set for three full days unless they were pressed by the enemy.

On the 28th we moved to Kaut, after destroying equipment too heavy to carry. The "Induna Star" had to be pumped out by hand as her small engine was under water and it took our engineers until the evening of the 30th to get her main engine going satisfactorily. Meanwhile volunteers were working under water in the shark and crocodile infested waters patching the holes in her hull.

On the morning of the 30th I dispatched Lieut. Sleeman back to the civilian camp at Sook with dispatches for H.Q. Moresby re our proposed move to New Britain, casualty list, etc

Lieut. Sleeman returned at 1700 hours and stated that Mr. McDonald had destroyed the wireless, thus cutting off our communication completely. He handed me a message from A.H.Q., Melbourne, as follows:- "Your role to remain and report also do as much damage as possible to the enemy". I had a conference with Capt. Bristowe, A.A.M.C. at once re the health of the men. They had mostly been struggling through jungle and swamp for nine days, prior to that they had been constantly on duty for many months and were now suffering from fatigue, malaria and dysentery and skin diseases. Furthermore there was only two months supply of food left, including that on the "Induna Star". Furthermore our only main and effective role, that of observation reports was now impossible. Added to this, our only chance of leaving the island was to go at once before the enemy discovered the whereabouts of the "Induna Star" (A.H.Q. still believed the "Induna Star" to have been destroyed). As she was now ready to sail I decided to embark the tps. and sail down the coast by night and lying in harbour by day, hoping to make the New Britain, east coast, somewhere below the Warengoi River. Mr. Morell acted as pilot, Sgts. Philpott and Patterson as engineers. By 1930 hrs. of the 30th we were moving out of Kaut Harbour and reached Kalili Harbour by daylight of the 31st without incident. Mr. Lee Lightbody of Kaili had a bullock killed, and the tps. were disembarked and fed. Here we learned that fighting had ceased on New Britain and our only chance was now to make for Port Moresby. Mr. Lightbody reported the natives on New Ireland were becoming increasingly hostile and looting of plantations had started. Here also I had hoped to contact or get news of the Coy's Namatanai detachment under Cpl. Rogers. None was available, except that he was supposed to be somewhere in the mountainous country south east of Namatanai, with representatives of the civilian administration, equipped with a telerradio set and therefore in a reasonable position.

By 1930 hrs. on the 31st ~~were~~ were again moving. We sailed down the coast without incident until early dawn of the first Feb. when an enemy destroyer was sighted lying inshore about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile astern. We were then within ten minutes sailing of the harbour at Gil Gil Plantation. Almost immediately the destroyer was observed to swing out from the shore and sail off to the west. This was presumed to be the destroyer which later on that day shelled our vacated positions and carried out landing operations in the Kaut Harbour area. The "Induna Star" was tied up close inshore and was in a well-hidden position all day and although enemy ships were passing up and down St. George's Channel all day and enemy planes were flying overhead, we were apparently unobserved. Inquiries were also made here regarding Cpl. Rogers and party without result.

On the night of 1st Feb. it fell dark and stormy and I decided to run straight for Woodlark Islands. Under a favourable ~~xxx~~ wind and a heavy following sea the "Induna Star" made good time and dawn of the 2nd found us out of sight of land approximately some 70 miles south east of Rabaul. By 0930 hrs. when we were about 90 miles south east of Rabaul an enemy recce plane was sighted travelling north west. She appeared not to see us but unfortunately the day was bright and clear and after a minute or two the plane changed direction and circled round us several times, then opened fire with machine guns but did not cause any serious casualties but causing further leakage in an already very leaky ship which needed constant pumping. At 0950 hrs. the enemy plane dived and bombed, one bomb hitting the "Induna Star" amidships on the starboard side. This bomb destroyed the life boat and caused considerable casualties, also the "Induna Star" was now taking in a dangerous amount of water and I considered further resistance useless and I had the ship stopped.



We then received instructions from the enemy to proceed towards Rabaul which we did slowly, accompanied by enemy planes, all available hands taking shifts on the pumps. At 1813 hrs. an enemy destroyer came up to within 500 yards, then sent a boat which took the wounded and officers aboard the destroyer. A line was passed to the "Induna Star" which was towed. The next morning we were lying off the eastern end of New Ireland when all but six of the personnel were transferred to the destroyer from the "Induna Star" and we proceeded to Rabaul and captivity.

Three men had been killed during the action and these had been buried at sea from the "Induna Star", one of the wounded died on the enemy destroyer during the night and was buried immediately, honours being paid by the enemy, myself giving what I remembered of the burial service.

During the action on the 2nd Capt. Bristowe, M.O. behaved remarkably well, tending the wounded in a very efficient and quiet manner in spite of very adverse conditions.

In previous actions on New Ireland as well as on the 2nd all the officers under my command had acted bravely coolly and efficiently, showing an excellent example to the ranks and carrying out their various tasks with efficiency and dispatch. All N.C.O's behaved in a like manner.

Lieut. Dixon and party had been captured before noon on 23rd Jan. Lieut. Dixon had been threatened with death if he would not divulge the Coys. whereabouts. He naturally refused and actually faced a firing squad on the morning of 26th Jan. but was reprieved and left Kavieng on an enemy ship for Rabaul P.O.W. Camp on 27th.

*J. Edmonds Wilson* Maj.  
Cmdg. No. 1. Indep. Coy., A.I.F.

*Manila Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 1945*

*JEW*