

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

Item number: 8/3/28

2/28 Infantry Battalion
July 1942, Diary by Lt S A Walker

PRO FORMA FOR UNIT WAR DIARY

UNIT 2/28 Aust Inf Bn

FOR PERIOD:-

COMMANDING OFFICER:-LT)COL.McCARTER

PERIOD COVERING:- EL ALEMEIN

DIARY RECORD OF EVENTS BY WX 5281 Lieut.S.A.J.WALKER.

- 22 to 25 Jul 42. :- Patrol Activity. Enemy Artillery registered Bn Area.
Patrols East of and parallel with KATARA Rd. penetrated 2000x.
Patrols West of and parallel with KATARA Rd. penetrated 1500x.
Patrols South West from Bn position endeavoured unsuccessfully to locate enemy position up to 2500x from our lines.
- 26 Jul 42. At approx 1500 hrs conference at 24th Bde HQ of representatives of all arms that were to take part in a three stage offensive against enemy positions South and South West of the ALEMEIN BOX.
- (a) 2/28 Bn were to attack 3500x South from their position and capture RUIN RIDGE, by 0100 hrs 27 Jul 42. Once captured RUIN RIDGE was to be held at all costs.
- (b) An English Bde, at 0200 hrs was to attack West from their position South of the ALEMEIN BOX, and join the left flank of the 2/28 Bn on RUIN RIDGE at 0400 hrs, 27 Jul 42, holding a line from the point of junction South along the KATARA Rd.
At 0430 hrs this Bde was to move 500x across the KATARA Rd, taking up a position running South from the centre of the 2/28 Bn front.
- (c) At first light 27 Jul 42. 2/43 Bn supported by a British Tank Bde were to attack South on a line West of, but parallel to that taken by 2/28 Bn, and join up with right flank of 2/28 Bn.
General exploitation of position was to follow.
- 1800 hrs. Orders Conference:- Attack on 400x front to RUIN RIDGE, axis of advance 400x from and parallel to KATARA RD, and on reaching objective exploit to 400x to right.
- 2300hrs. Start Line laid 500x South of Bn position facing line of attack Bearing ?
Bn moved out of holding position and formed up on start line frontage 400x.
see attached plan

Continuation of Diary record of events by Lieut Walker.

2400 hrs

Attack commenced. Rate of Advance 200x per minute. Enemy fire from ahead and both flanks, commenced after a few minutes and consisted of a 50 or 88 mm from either flank, {20mm} MMG LMG and mortars. The 20 mm and MMG firing on swinging arc and not fixed lines. Resistance was met throughout the whole advance, it was particularly stiff at 1,000x where wire and a minefield was encountered, and immediately short of the objective. An Axis Tape was laid from the original Bn position through to the objective. At the wire and minefield, gaps were made by Engineers 50x on either side of the tape in accordance with Bde instructions.

During the last 1,000x of the advance the attack tended to lose direction to the West, so that on reaching the objective it was necessary to exploit to the East instead of to the West, in order to occupy fully the assigned positions.

This exploitation was led by N.7 Pl, "A" Coy who suffered heavy casualties in the process, including the Coy Commander wounded.

The attack had been silent from the outset with a 30 minute barrage placed on RUIN RIDGE itself from 0030 hrs to 0100 hrs.

It was necessary for the advanced elements to go to ground for a few minutes prior to the final assault to avoid running into this barrage.

The objective was taken on time. The success signal was sent over the wireless of the attached Arty Officer at 0105 hrs. The Bn wireless having been hit during the advance.

Bn transport and supporting arms following up the attack followed the Axis Tape laid during the advance, but were held up by the wire at the 1,000x mark, where considerable congestion occurred before the gaps were found.

Enemy Anti Tank guns situated well outside either flank of the advance, firing from both sides took very heavy toll of the bunches of vehicles at this point. Only a few vehicles getting through to the forward troops, who were in consequence short of ammunition, Anti Tank mines and Danet Wire.

Of the supporting arms:-

Sjt HOCKING: 1-2 pounders
1-6 pounder

Lieut SCANLON: 2-2 pounders

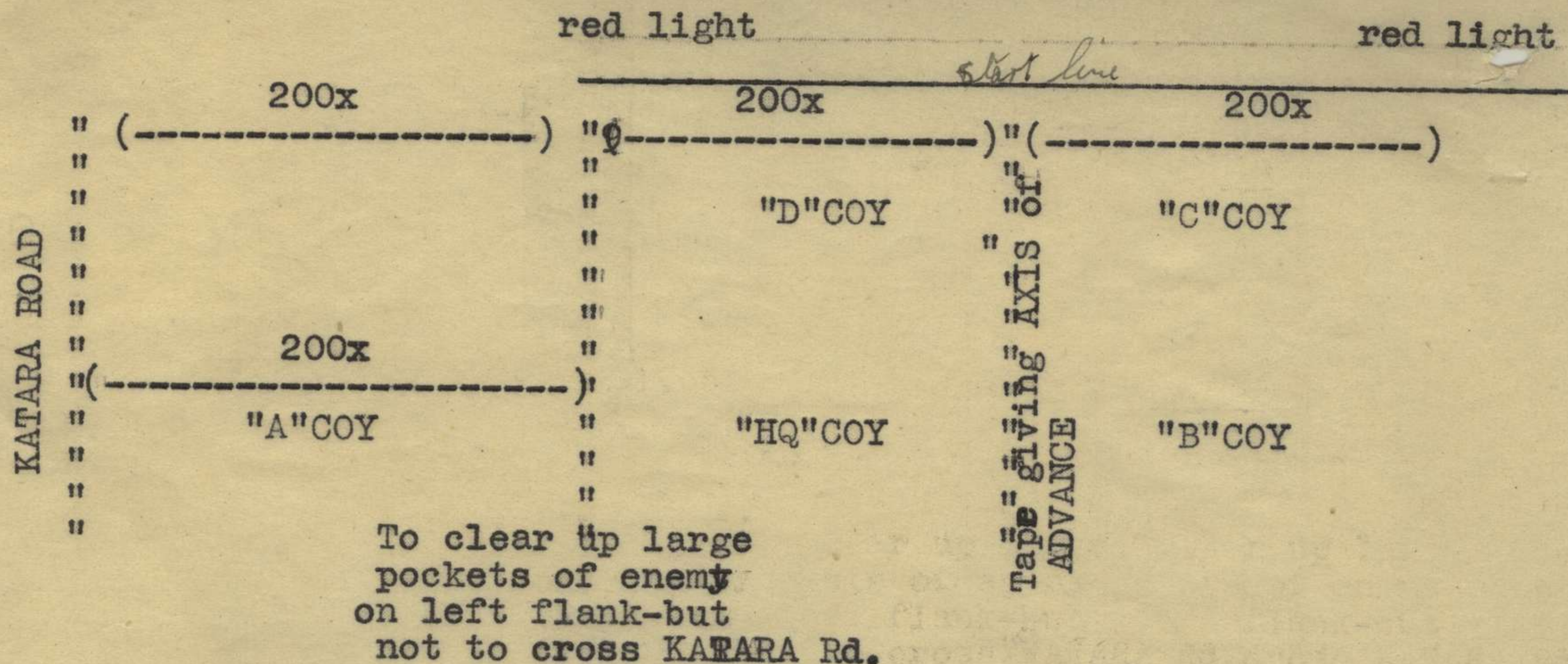
Lieut KINNANE: 3-6 pounders

1 Bn, 2 pounder Anti Tank Guns
~~4-6~~ 4-6 pounder Anti Tank Guns
3-2 pounder Anti Tank Guns
1 MMG

Reached the Objective.

Positions taken up on the objective are given in attached plan, sighting of all Anti Tank Guns and Infantry Positions had to be done in the semi dark. (Almost full moon)

PLAN OF POSITION



Lt. Carter Lt. Col.
Co. 7/28Bw 16/27 Jul. '42.

Continuation of Diary Record of Events by Lieut Walker

During and after the advance communications with the rear, for return of Prisoners and carriage of wounded, were maintained by the Carrier Pl. From their reports, and from sounds of enemy movement clearly audible to all, it was apparent by 0200 hrs that the enemy were closing in from both flanks to the rear of the Bn position, and were rapidly cutting communications to rear.

Lieut HEAD the Bn Liaison Officer with Bde, who had accompanied the attack, left for Bn HQ at about 0230 hrs to convey this information to Bde.

At 0330 hrs approximately, the Arty Officer attached to the Bn whose wireless had now failed left for the rear in his carrier, in an endeavour to get the same information through to Bde.

Finally at 0430 hrs, "D" Coy C.Q.M.S., Sjt LYLE volunteered to try to get to Bde HQ, to inform them that the enemy had moved in in force across the Bn's rear. When last seen his truck was under heavy enemy fire.

The Liaison Officer for the English Bde which was due to join the 2/28 Bn on its objective was escorted to the rendez-vous - The Ruins East of KATARA RD - at the appointed time 0400 hrs and again at 0500 and 0630 hrs, but could find no sign of their approach. On the last occasion the party was heavily sniped by enemy MMGs. At first light enemy tanks and armoured cars receded. the Bn position on the forward slope of RUIN RIDGE. At about 0800 hrs heavy fire from Armoured Vehicles from the South East and the Sangars occupied by the troops, made it necessary to withdraw "A" Coy to the vicinity of Bn HQ.

From 0730 hrs onwards Bn HQ area was under consistent mortar and Arty fire and all positions held in rear of the ridge were under 20mm and MMG fire from the North East.

At about 0800 hrs enemy light recce vehicles and tanks approached on a small *feature* 2,500x WNW of the Bn position, in the general area in which it was anticipated our own tanks would appear in their advance with the 2/43 Bn which should have commenced at dawn.

At 0830 hrs Armoured cars under cover of fire from these enemy tanks closed in on the Bn position, and also moved across the rear of the area held by the Bn.

At 0900 hrs our Anti Tank guns knocked out 6 enemy vehicles, but crews of all Anti Tank guns now came under MG fire from the rear and it was impossible to man their guns.

The Bn was now completely surrounded by armoured cars which worked forward under cover of fire from enemy tanks further back, while 20mm, MMG and mortar fire the heads of our own troops well down. In this manner the enemy was able to cut off and dispose of sections and platoons one by one, until at 1030 hrs Bn HQ area was occupied by several armoured cars and surviving personnel taken prisoner. An effort had been made to hinder the enemy armoured vehicles by bringing Arty fire to bear on them before they dispersed.

Unfortunately the only communication with Bde was by one wireless set WT repaired by Sigs. after about eight hour's work. Messages reporting the situation were sent immediately this set was capable of functioning, i.e., about 0930 hrs onwards.

Last message was "All up over run" (Sent at approximately 1020 hrs)

After capture troops were marched about 5 miles. There the German Guards permitted the C.O. to address all captured personnel who were advised about their future conduct as AIF in enemy hands.

*Lt Walker Lt Col.
Co. 28Bn 26/27 Jul. 42*

SKETCH MAP OF POSITIONS AT ALEMEIN

100 x

200x

300 x

400x

500 x

600 x

700 x

800x

8 H
20 men
Cpl. Bell

Keogh
9 Pl.

25 men

2pd
H N

"A" Coy

7 Pl.
8-men

18 Pl.
12 men
Cpl Logan

17 Pl.
23 men
Lt. Stewart.

6 pd
JK

"D" Coy
HQ.

6 Pd.
JK

GDD
16 Pl.
16 men
Lt. Chadwick.

600 yds.
13 Pl.
Lt. Damper.

15 Pl.
Sgt.
McAuliffe.

14 Pl
Lt. Hickey.
2 pd.
H.

2pd.
JS.

BHQ.

2 Pl.

HQ
Coy.

2pd
JK
5 Pl.

10 Pl
25men

B. Coy 12 Pl
18 men

11 Pl
8men
6pd

Position taken up at "RUIN RIDGE"

FJL

Lt. Scanlon Lt. Col.
Co. 728 Bn 26/27 Jul. 42

Abbrev.:-

J.S. Lt. Scanlon.
J.K. Lt. Kinnane.
H. Sgt. Hoskings.

200 yds to KATARA Rd.