

TIDAL RIVER

Arrival:

Entrained at Spencer Street in May 1942 for the trip to Fish Creek - all Victorians. Then truck to Darby River - old chalet and several administrative huts and tents - informed that this was headquarters. Continued to Tidal River and found that we were the first to arrive, other than Officers and NCO'S. Advised that we would form '1 Section A Platoon'. Shown tent lines and drew palliasses and blankets - given tour of the camp.

Camp:

Large Assembly Hall	Administration Hut	R A P
Lecture Hut	Mess Hall	Sig Hut
Canteen	Cookhouse	Ablution Block
Tent Lines		

Now began to believe as the Unit song said at a later date, that it was "The Arsehole of the Universe".

The Unit:

The remainder of the personnel arrived over the next three days. Our time was occupied by plenty of drill to refresh us. Finally a full parade of the Unit and meeting the OC and other officers. We had learned of the structure of the Unit (2/7th Independent Coy.)

Headquarters:

OC, 2IC and adjutant.CSM, one Jeep and driver, QM Sergeant, Company Clerk, Hygiene Sergeant, Signals Section, Medical Section (Medico and OR Corps), Engineer Section, Armourer - one section, Cooks, Three Platoons (A,B and C), Captain as OC. Each of three Sections divided into 2 Sub-sections each with one corporal, one lance corporal and 7 Ors.

Informed of the rules. Training for approximately 3 months with no leave, except for limited compassionate leave. All mail to be censored. Unable to hack it - back to original Unit.

Reveille at 5.30am - Stand Down at 4 pm - Mess at 6pm, showered and in dress uniform. Six days a week - Sundays off. After 7pm lectures until 10pm. Payday fortnightly on Thursday and no lectures that night. Canteen was open and beer on tap. Duties - armed guard every night around camp; issued with 10 rounds of .303 ammunition. Cookhouse and latrine fatigues designed to give limited interference with training.

Training Commences:

Daily routine comprised 'becoming fit' with an emphasis on FIT. The morning and afternoon lectures covered a multitude of subjects - Signals, Engineering (Explosives), Weapons, Drill, Unarmed Combat, Map Reading and Making, Night Exercises, Route Marching, Tactics for Combating Ambushes. Section and sub-section movement while patrolling, Assault course, range firing, primary medical care of injuries and illnesses.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A POOR PRIVATE

5.30AM - An explosion between the tent lines shatters the stillness of the morning. Half a stick of gelignite set by "Horse" Christiansen. Erupt from the blankets, only camp I was ever in where seven blankets were issued as a barrier against the cold. In fact as we went in July, at night, dressed in service uniform, balaclavas, greatcoat, scarf and socks. Dressed in shorts and singlet and sandshoes and out for the morning run for 30 minutes, either over the river, or along the main road into the camp or towards Oberon. Back, and the luxury of a hot shower - another plus - also attached to the block was a drying shed where, on wet days we could dry our clothes after training. Change to khakis and to breakfast. After a meal, mostly roughage, training periods in weapons or unarmed combat. Later still, range firing, assault course and practical explosive demonstrations. After lunch usually a lecture in signalling plus Morse Code practice and basic applications of explosives. Another trick to unnerve use was a time fuse set in the rafters of the training hut and exploded sometime during the course of the lecture. The sound was unbelievably realistic and nerve shattering.

Courses:

1) Signals

All personnel were required to be proficient in Morse Code to 10 words per minute. Signal Section has a much higher rate of transmitting. A knowledge of how to operate the No.11 set (the main communication unit) requiring wet batteries, charger and several men to carry it. As well, a knowledge of the workings of the portable sets which had a range of about 40 miles in good flat conditions. Under the tutelage of the Master (Lt. J. Fowler), most of us managed to pass the 10 words a minute (just). The master was superb on the key as he had been a Morse Code operator with the PMG and was also a delight as a teacher.

2) Engineering

The purpose of the course was to instruct in the handling, preparation and end use of explosives as in demolitions, booby traps and timed devices for ships and buildings. We had lectures in the Training Hut and at a demolition site situated on the main road into the camp. The storage dumps for explosives and ammunition was at the road junction of the main road and the track to Oberon. Lectures consisted of information on types of explosives, fuses, timing devices and handling of the compounds. As mentioned previously, these sessions took place after lunch when a little 'nod' was indicated. Then the dreams would be shattered by the detonation of a fuse or a similar device located in the cross bearers of the roof... the speed with which we learned to concentrate on the subject at hand was miraculous.

After the initial sessions, we were taken to the explosive pit and handed dynamite for the first time. With barely disguised trepidation, I crimped by first detonator onto the fuse wire. Obeyed the safety rule and put the 'now alive' detonator and pliers behind my back - only loose one hand that way!!!! We gradually progressed until we became proficient, learning about the various time fuses both chemical and electronic (!) and the use of the electronic dynamo for setting the surprise package off!!

Came the day when we were taught to deal with a tank with the aid of the "sticky" bomb. This was a device which was a ball with a short stick attached to it as a handle. The outer casing was metal sheath which when a pin was removed, flew apart and exposed a glass ball coated with a sticky substance. The fuse was in the handle. It was fairly heavy so one would have to stand within about 12 feet (about 3.5 metres) of the tank in order to shatter the glass and stick the bomb to the side of the tank. The blast was

all forward (we hoped) and the fuse was a time fuse. I can tell you that I got rid of the bomb in a hurry against the heavy steel plate and believed that the blast was all forward after it had happened. It blew a nice hole. We learned later that they weren't used a great deal as they were unreliable. Near the end of the course, we were given a demonstration of the demolition of a wooden bridge which the engineers had built on the demolition site. Don't know whether the engineers were sad or glad at their bridge disappearing in one big bang, or at the success of the explosion.

3) *Unarmed Combat*

As the name implies, there was me, without a weapon, expected to deal with an opponent - armed or unarmed - and disable or kill the said opponent. The tuition area was on the sandbank alongside the Tidal River. Our instructor was W.O. Geoff Weber, a large gentleman, larger than most of us. His father and uncle had been professional wrestlers.

Over the weeks we learnt all sorts of movements and counters to them; during this period we all made frequent contact with the sand. I seemed to be picked for demonstration by said WO frequently and so seemed to go flying through the air more often than any other member of the group. At 9 stone 8 pounds, I went a long way in his hands. However, one day I was asked to demonstrate in reverse, on him, and everything worked, he went flying through the air over my head and landed with a thud that shook the ground.....it was my day!!!! After that I was always on the receiving end. Came the day when we had to face an opponent with a rifle and bayonet. We had one go with the scabbard on then it came off - an exhilarating experience when the adversary flies over the shoulder, drops heavily to the ground and leaves with his rifle in your hands. NOBODY warned us that if we had to fight the Japanese that they were experts in martial arts.

4) *Weapons Training*

All of us had had some measure of infantry training so the introduction to familiar and new weapons was not to learn the basics but to make us more proficient in what we already knew. The range of weapons covered included rifle, Bren gun, Thompson sub-machine gun, hand grenade, stud grenade, 2" mortar, bayonet, knife, pistol and carried in the armourer's store were cross-bows and shotguns, the latter to shoot birds etc. for food.

We were issued with the standard .303 Lee/Enfield when we entered camp plus bayonet. Other weapons were issued for instruction and range practice as required. The Bren and Thompson were new to me as I had been trained on the Lewis Gun, a much more complicated weapon from the First World War and prone to more breakdowns. The weapon instruction was given to us, once again, on the sands beside Tidal River and the firing range was off the main road and towards Oberon. Our accuracy gradually improved although I must admit I was more an 'inner' than a 'bull' merchant. The Thompson was excellent as one could spray it as long as there was plenty of ammunition. The pistol was another question - I was no Bill Hickock. The use of the knife was partly involved with unarmed combat, but also the most efficient use of the weapon. I was selected as 2" mortar man for the section - together with a number 2. It took a while before we could get within 10 yards of the target but it was a case of "mastering" the use of the sight (a bubble type) and keeping a firm grip on the barrel. I can remember it became a trifle warm after firing for awhile. We had use also of smoke and fragmentation bombs.

5) *Assault Course*

This was situated not far from the demolition area and had every imaginable obstacle such as wire and logs, ditches, overhead climbing devices and a variety of tunnels to get through. As we became more

proficient (fitter) we were introduced to explosions and Brens firing over the top of us - made one realise the ground was a very friendly place and not to raise the rumps as one crawled along. As I remember, there were a couple of wounded during the course of these exercises. In retrospect, the hours spent on the assault course stood us in good stead in the later operations in New Guinea.

Whilst the Specialist Courses were taking place, that morning run and sometimes a swim in the briny was a constant thing 6 days a week. On frosty mornings we would come out to find the washing on the line was frozen stiff. Also limited drill but plenty of route marches increasing in length. Gradually the blisters disappeared as our feet toughened, the shoulders became used to the webbing and the weight of the equipment. The solemnity of the march was lightened by the singing of songs, both bawdy and pure.

In the same mould, we learned the crafty art of ambushes and the combating of same. The latter was helped by reports back from Malaya brought back by personnel who escaped. Map reading and making now commenced to play a greater role in our instruction periods and our instructors, in turn, emphasised the importance of reconnaissance as a large part of our front line role. Also included were night exercises with the consequence of parties going astray, wandering through the low scrub towards Oberon. Regarding Oberon, we did not regard it too kindly. Runs up the face on the camp side were frequent and punishment was to wear full equipment, run to the top, plant a cross with one's name on it and return. You could not leave until 4 pm and had to be back and in dress uniform for Mess at 6 pm. A little more wearing than a route march.

Pay night on the Thursday night once a fortnight was a time of relaxation and beer available at the Canteen. I must admit with no drinking in between it didn't take many pots to lay me low. The worst aspect of the pay night was to be on latrine fatigue the next day and have to empty the urinal can which was a half 44 gallon drum, and always full to the brim. An awkward load for two, trying not to spill the urine over ones boots. The canteen did a good trade during the week although the camp food was good and plenty of it. Nights were taken up by lectures to the company in the assembly hut - talk about keeping us busy. Towards the end of the course we were taken one night to the beach area, and set down on the sand banks. We were then treated to a display of night firing of the machine guns loaded with tracers. A magnificent spectacle with the guns firing from each end of the beach and the tracers meeting out to sea. As good as a fireworks display.

Another task was guarding the camp at night, tow hours on and patrolling the perimeter of the camp. Our first surprise is that we were issued with 10 live rounds and orders to shoot if we didn't get the password. Looking back we could have been guarding the camp from a German or Japanese landing party from a submarine in Bass Strait. However as the course progressed we were informed that we could expect raids from 8 Company which was in another camp nearby. This made the proposition of shooting more serious as we didn't fancy wounding or killing a fellow Australian. As it turned out we resolved the situation with unarmed combat. One raid that 8 Company made on us they penetrated through to Major Macadie's office where he was sitting and threw in a sham grenade. Caused him some consternation and ringing ears. One of the benefits of guard duty was a hot cup of tea at the cookhouse.

Time passed and toward the end of August when we were feeling as fit as Mallee Bulls, an exercise designed to test us was notified. We were to patrol towards the lighthouse at the end of the Promontory fighting an imaginary enemy all the way, if full battle order. It would take 48 hours and the only food allowed was the 24 hour emergency ration. This was a tin about 6x4 inches and about 1/2 inch thick. From memory it contained a block of concentrated soup, a block of dehydrated vegetables and meat, a

block of chocolate, a packet of instant coffee, 2 barley sugars and a block of compressed fruit. As a nice touch I think I remembered that it contained 2 sheets of toilet paper. We set out early in the morning, and skirting Mt. Oberon advanced into the undulating country which formed the first part of the Promontory. Our weapons were loaded with blanks, and we practised overcoming ambushes, and attacking concentrations of the enemy. These exercises proceeded through the night with little chance of rest, and the next morning we crested a rise and there was the lighthouse in the distance. This was as close as we approached to the lighthouse and its buildings, and the order was given to turn around and fight our way back to Tidal River which we reached in late afternoon - a weary and footsore, hungry bunch. The showers were popular and we made short work of tea that night. We were to realise in a few months time that this was child's play to what we were going to experience in New Guinea.

The following week we started to be issued with all sorts of new goodies from the Q Store. The first was a new rifle - The Ross Canadian - 303 - less grooves in the barrel, an elevated peep sight and the muzzle not completely enclosed. A short round type bayonet which meant we had to get closer. The rest of the rifle was similar to the standard Lee Enfield. Naturally they were coated with grease, and the first task was plenty of boiling water and the use of the 4x2 and rifle oil. The Tommy gunners, ie. Section OC's and corporals and lance corporals and the platoon sergeants etc. received their weapons. Also the Bren guns were issued, one to each sub-section. After cleaning and inspection we were taken to the range accompanied by the Armourer (Hugh McIntosh) where, with test firing, the sights were zeroed until we could hit the bull.

After this we were issued with the British style battle dress, a sleeping bag, torch, commando style dagger, tin hat, gas mask and gas cape, extra socks as well as being able to renew any previously issued worn clothing. We began to have the feeling that it wouldn't be long and we would be moving. We had had the news that the situation was not very good on a place called the Kokoda Track north of Port Moresby and that the Japs were very close to the latter.

Very soon after this 1 Section was told one afternoon to prepare to move the next morning as advance party for the Company to Queensland. The following morning in the dark we boarded trucks together with our gear and were driven to Fish Creek where we boarded a train to Melbourne. We were advised that personnel who lived in the Melbourne area would have leave until 6.30 pm and to report to Spencer Street. The remainder had leave in Melbourne. I got off the train, sighted my mother in the car at the shopping centre. This being early September 1942 I was able to say goodbye to my parents and fiancée and wouldn't see them again until December 1943.

Spencer Street was bursting with troops proceeding north. All the Section turned up on time - some 'slightly' inebriated - said goodbye to our folks and entrained for parts unknown. At this time we didn't realise that within a month we would be in a forward area and in fact behind the Jap lines. Settled down in the train, and the spoils of the afternoon were produced by the ones who had stayed in Melbourne. Frank Bedgood produced a large piece of steak from his pocket, Henry Machieson a chicken and sundry bottles of beer, rum and whisky. Soon the whole Section was merry. We nearly lost Henry out the train door - he wanted to urinate, and we just caught him as he was disappearing. Kept a tight hold on him after that. Arrived at Albury at about midnight and transferred to the sleeper troop train for the trip to Sydney. There were three tiers of bunks with the top bunk almost to the roof - just room to get in and don't raise your head. Between tiredness and the grog we all slept well. Arrived in Sydney next morning, and then entrained for Brisbane and from there the next morning we were taken to the showgrounds where we were to spend two days in the pig pens - it ponged.

Proceeded to do some sightseeing around Brisbane - service personnel everywhere including Americans. The third morning we were picked up by trucks and taken to Yandina near Nambour. There was militia brigade encamped near the latter. At Yandara we were taken to a bare paddock and there were told by Lt. McKenzie that we would be erecting tents, digging latrines and erecting an ablution block in preparation for the arrival of the rest of the Company. Work started and it was pleasant working in the sunshine after the cold of Tidal River. It wasn't all hard work. Late afternoon we went by truck to the beach nearby for a swim, and we were able to bring pineapples and water melons from nearby farms.

The day arrived for the arrival of the rest of the Company, and it was good to see them again. At the same time a bunch of Middle East men joined us, mostly from the 2/2 Antitank Regiment of the 7th Division. They were reinforcements for the Company. The next day we (1 Section) were told to get ready to go out on an exercise. Apparently the Brigadier of the Militia Brigade had contacted Major McAdie and asked for a raiding group to attack and harass the brigade artillery regiment. We were to establish a base near their camp and raid them at our convenience. We moved out in the afternoon with a week's supplies and dressed in giggle suits, sandals, and web equipment with haversacks.

We found a base on high ground overlooking one of the batteries of the regiment. Our first task was to raid the position and disable the guns. The breach blocks and sights were still on the guns, so it was a simple task to unslip these and carry them back to our base. Over the next two days we harassed them in their tents and took items of food like cakes etc., also items of equipment. Made ourselves proper bastards, and the militia were getting riled. The next night we raided their headquarters and took the spark plug leads from their trucks together with the rotor buttons. This meant that the meals for the regiment, which were cooked at headquarters, wouldn't arrive. We had really stirred up a hornet's nest. On the fourth day it was decided to set a booby trap on the road leading to headquarters. We picked a suitable tree beside the road, ringed it with a charge of explosives and waited. By this time it was afternoon, around 4 pm., a staff car approached - everything worked perfectly. The tree dropped - the driver slammed on his brakes and the officer in the rear shot forward. On approaching with a war whoop, we found it was the Brigadier. After calming the old bloke down we retreated to our hideout. The next day we received a message from the Brigadier for Lt. McKenzie to report to headquarters. We were told to report back to our own camp immediately. The Brig. had had enough of the exercise and thought his troops had had enough experience of raids, and that the regiment were mad and waiting for us with pick-axe handles.

A truck picked us up and we returned to Yandara. The camp was agog when we arrived - we would be proceeding north in the near future - destination unknown - but the furphy was New Guinea. We had to hand in our new uniforms to the Q store, and they were packed in wooden boxes. We never saw them again!!!! The rest of the company had dyed their khakis green, but 1 Section didn't have time. We packed our spare clothing into our kit bags, and packed the essentials for patrols into our web equipment. After a couple of days we were told we were moving the next morning, and the trucks duly arrived early and we were moved to the railway at Nambour. We then found we were proceeding north to Townsville. The troop train dropped us at a siding out of the town near the meat works. The holding camp was just down the road. We were allowed into the town on leave while we were there, and saw what effect the war was having on the town. The harbour was busy with shipping and the wharves were occupied loading and unloading stores. Servicemen were everywhere and there was a very large airport north of the town. Henry Mackinson and myself and one other nearly ended up down south one night. We caught the train, went to sleep and missed the siding. Fortunately we were able to get a goods train back - boozed again.

Came the day when we were to move - rumour was rife. We were informed we were going to the aerodrome. Gradually the Company was loaded onto a motley collection of planes. Some were military DC3's and others were ex-civilian planes that had been stripped down. Our kit bags had been packed away back at the camp so that all we had was our web equipment loaded with the essentials. Gradually the Company was loaded until there was a part of 1 Section and some of headquarters personnel still left. Our faces dropped when we were informed that there were no more planes. We spent the night in Townsville and the next morning we were taken to the port. There were two Qantas civilian Empire Air Flying Boats and we were told that we were going to Port Moresby on them. On board we were put in the promenade deck area near the galley. Officers were in the 1st class near the tail. Took off in a cloud of spray and soon we were flying over the coral reef - a magnificent sight. We were looking out the port holes at one stage of the flight and the next thing the wing of the other plane was overlapping ours. Found out later they could hit because of the air pressure in between. We had a good meal on board - still had the civilian crew including stewards. Looked after us in right royal manner.

As we swung in over the harbour at Port Moresby we saw the remains of the MACDHUI which had been sunk by bombs. The wharves were busy and there were plenty of small boats plying back and forth. We landed, and our dream had come true, we were in a forward area. We were taken to Murray Barracks and joined the rest of the Company. We were informed that Dickenson had had a fright on the way over. He was on a bay bomber - asked where the toilet was and shown a hole in the floor near the tail. On the way the plane hit an air pocket, he grabbed the chain which released the sliding door and it flew off and he was staring at the ocean down below. He went pale and forgot to urinate. We were assured it was a true story.

Well here we were trained to the hilt, bloodthirsty and dying to meet the enemy. I had come a long way since that day in February 1941 when I joined up. Had been sick of waiting to hear from the Navy and the Air Force - was in the 2/21st Battalion for half an hour until they found out I was a dental student - choice of the Dental Corp. or back to the hospital - chose the former. Was in Puckapunyal until November when we were joined into a Dental Unit to go to the Middle East. The Japs came into the war and stopped this move. We were sent to Echuca to the Engineers Training Depot. Lost my brother in 13 Bomber Squadron in a raid to Timor. Notice was in routine order 2 weeks later for Independent Companies and I applied and with some wangling was transferred. Helped that I had had three years infantry training in the 6th Battalion (Militia) before the war. So here I was, dream come true to get overseas.

Here endeth the first part, little did we know what was in store for us - perhaps we would not have been so eager.

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Port Moresby

Port Moresby - to me it looked like a wild west town taken over by the 7th Cavalry and the Indians replaced by the Papuan natives.

We had landed on the harbour and came ashore near the wharf where ships were unloading with more ships in the roadstead. We were loaded into trucks and driven through the main street past the hotel and shops and out to the Murray Barracks where we were to spend the next three days. The barracks were near the administrator's house and situated on raised ground overlooking the town.

We were shown into a long bare hut - no stretches and no beds in sight. Concrete is a hard surface to sleep on - no hip and elbow holes. Settled in with our first question - "What is happening?" We heard about the frequent air raids, in fact had seen many anti-aircraft gun emplacements on the way to the barracks. Also the fact that the Japanese were on the north side of the Owen Stanley's, but were being held at that point, although things were desperate. Further, that elements of the 7th Division had landed and were in action, and that a brigade of the 6th Division was landing. Militia brigades were encamped on the outskirts of town.

Next morning we staggered out with creaking joints, after the night spent on the concrete with only the sleeping bags between us and the floor. After breakfast one section was taken to a vat of green dye - half a 44 gallon drum - simmering over a fire. We then had to dye our "giggle" suits, trousers and shirts, as we had not been able to do them at Yandina as we had been out on exercise as mentioned previously. We were to learn that this dye was a time bomb as the skin of some men were allergic to the dye and resulted in a severe dermatitis. Also handed in our tin hats and gas masks which were packed into crates never to be seen again. The next day visited a cousin in one of the Militia battalions, and saw a little of the countryside and a little of the town. Not much sign of the civilian life, certainly a military town.

Day three we were issued with our first live ammunition, really felt we were going to war. We were then driven to the Seven Mile Strip (I think) - there were 3 strips, Jackson's (I believe now the airport for Port Moresby), the Seven Mile and another one. There was a line up of DC3's and civilian versions of the Hudson bomber. In the distance scattered in the "bomb proof" bays were some fighters and bombers - looked to be pitifully few. 1 Section was assigned to a Hudson. The interior had been stripped of seats and was bare. The only seats were those for the two pilots up forward and behind the bulkhead in the cabin the seat for the radio operator with his radio attached to the bulkhead. Our pilots and radio operator were Americans. We had on full webbing and our kitbags and loaded with us a week's supply of rations and ammunition for the Section.

We eventually took off and headed north with the planes keeping in a loose formation. We were informed that there was no fighter cover for us - gave us a feeling of security I don't think. However here we were finally off to war. Forgot to mention that we had been issued with American style lace-up gaiters. We were to appreciate them as the British style gaiter would have been useless in the mud. The saving grace was the strap going under the instep of the boot and holding the gaiter in place. Took a bit of getting used to the lace but we soon got the hang of undoing only half of the lace and undoing the strap.

I digress - we eventually reached the Owen Stanley's and headed for the gap. Looking out the windows it looked wild country down there, and little did we realise that we were heading for country just as bad. As our plane approached the gap we could see that we were not going to clear it by much, and suddenly one of the motors started to cough, and we lost some height. I estimated that we cleared the trees below by about 50 feet. Having cleared the gap the motor picked up again and we flew steadily on. We approached an area which was not quite so mountainous and suddenly the radio operator leapt up grabbed a Tommy Gun and holding at the high port, raced up and down the plane between our feet and yelling "Watch out for Zeros - Watch out for Zeros"!!!! We were stunned - don't know if he expected to

shoot them down. The windows were fixed and not like the Kai Bombers with ports in the windows. Apparently the planes had been attacked recently when they came up to drop food. Eventually he calmed down and resumed his seat, and we settled back to chatting amongst ourselves. The country was less mountainous after leaving the Stanley's.

Suddenly more drama - we were approaching the landing strip in Wau. We had been told we were going there at the last minute and that the 5th Company were already in residence and had been there for some time. Our friend the radio operator gave us instructions, have all our equipment ready, and that we had to unload the plane in 5 minutes. We prepared, and then the motors throttled back and we descended. Looking out the window we could see mountains on our right and sloping hills on the left. We began to bank to the left and could see the strip with coconut palms at the bottom. We swung around and just cleared the palms and landed suddenly on a short flat area and then started to climb about halfway up the slope (equivalent to Punt Road hill), we did a wheelie and faced back the other way. The door opened and then the panic started. The gear was literally thrown out and we bodies with it. The door was slammed, the motors revved and the plane took off down the hill. The crews certainly didn't like staying on the ground too long.

We hurried to one side of the strip out of the way of the other planes. There were some sheds and hangers there. We now had time to draw breath. The strip was very wide, and was certainly steep with the bottom almost flat. The trick coming in was to just clear the palms. The town was on the left, to the east were the mountains mentioned before which we were to get to know only too well in the future. There were some 5th Coy. men to greet us - they looked scruffy, but in a few weeks we were to look just as bad.

We were led downhill and past the palms to some buildings over a road. These were the buildings making up the native hospital and where we were to be billeted in the wards. They were complete with beds so that we had some comfort. We had soon rigged our mosquito nets which had been issued at Yandina, laid out the sleeping bags, stowed the gear away and located the latrines down the back of the hospital.

Over the next few weeks we got to know the geography around the town and learnt some of the history. The town was based on gold mining by two methods. Firstly alluvial mining using dredges and secondly hydraulic mining using power hoses. The dredges had been flown in piece by piece using twin motor Fokkers and flying them over the mountains to the east from Salamaua and Lae. The dredges were in the river at Bulolo - a small town to the north of Wau reached by sealed road. The hydraulic mine was to Mt.Kaindi to the west of the town and past the power station.

The civilian population had been evacuated and the area was under the control of Fleay Force under Colonel Fleay. parts of the town had been wrecked to deny it to the Japanese who were occupying Salamaua and Lae. The 5th Coy. were stationed at Skindiwi in the mountains and about halfway to Salamaua. To the north the patrolling was done by the N.G.V.R. unit which comprised of men who had lived in New Guinea. the 5th Coy. had made a raid on Salamaua back in July and had killed a significant number of Japanese but had suffered no casualties themselves.

We commenced patrolling to get us fit and became familiar with the roads and tracks in the vicinity of Wau. We also did some two day patrols on which we learned that our sleeping bags were useless - they were not waterproof. We tried a blanket and although it dried more quickly it was extra weight to

carry. We eventually used the gas cape which made its own warmth, but this was much further ahead. We became fit, and fortunately didn't suffer from foot blisters as our feet had toughened at the Prom.

During this time up until Christmas we lost two men who had tried to defuse some three inch mortar bombs which they had found. Also we lost one of the 2 Section Corporals. A four gallon tin booby trap loaded with gelignite, nuts, bolts and stones with a push-pull switch which he was making safe exploded. It happened at House Coppa on the Black Cat Trail where these devices were set at night. We also had a D platoon formed, in which the under age troops were put until they turned 18.

Also during this time the engineers repaired bridges which had been wrecked, repaired the town swimming pool, and the power station so that we had power again. On walking around the town we found the houses were a sad sight as they had been ransacked. As it turned out the town could have been left alone. Also found that I know the Staff Captain with Fleay Force Headquarters from the old 6th Battalion days in the Militia as well as from school. During the period food began to get short as although there had been a supply before we arrived and we had brought some, the 5th and NGVR had to all be supplied with food. The planes were needed to supply the Buna and Gona offensives. We were down to two meals a day and supplemented rations from the gardens in the area - corn, kau-kau, paw-paw and bananas. The smokers became desperate and were glad of the rations of Claude Mans and myself. Tobacco was also eked out by "boong twist" - a black tarry rope of tobacco which the natives smoked rolled up in newspaper. There was a delightful story from Moresby at this time - an urgent message was sent from the headquarters of the troops in Buna to drop a No.11 set to them. The story goes that the 'thrower-outers' pushed the set out and then one of them looked down and said "Oops, forgot to put a parachute on the set". I take it that the next set that was dropped was equipped with a parachute.

Towards the end of November 1 Section was notified that we were going out on a seven day patrol. This was our first long distance patrol. Other sections had also carried out similar tasks. We were to go via Bulolo and onto the Black Cat Track, inland towards Mubo, and then to Skindiwi where the 5th Coy. were stationed. We were then to proceed back to Wau. Preparation started and discussion was centred around what we were going to take with us. The basics were 100 rounds per rifleman plus a bandolier of emergency ammo for the Brens, two grenades each and a spare Bren magazine each. The Tommy gunners had six magazines plus 100 spare rounds. Also I had my Smith and Weston plus the issued 10 rounds of ammo which was in short supply. Also we had seven days of rations. This was 7 tins of Bully Beef and biscuits for 7 days. At this stage in the war we still had canned heat so we had one each. We also had our wound dressing pack and of course the R.A.P. bag which each section carried. The remainder of our packs were for personal clothing and sleeping gear. Bill Kendall and I decided to lace 2 ground sheets together and sleep in that. We had long ago retired our sleeping bags (used only the base) and decided that blankets were no better. I carried a spare pair of pants, shirt and socks. We were ordered to leave all personal documents behind. The lot weighed 55 pounds - not including my rifle - and all weighed on a set of beam balance scales in the town.

We had a gentle stroll to Bulolo where we crossed the river and proceeded inland to the mountains. The climbing was steep and in the afternoon we reached House Coppa where there was a standing patrol from 2 Section. It was here that a couple of weeks before one of the corporals had blown himself up with the booby trap as mentioned before. House Coppa was a small gold mine and we spent the night there. Next morning we left early so had the pleasure of disarming the booby trap.

The next section of the track wasn't too bad but soon we started to climb and all that day we climbed up and down sharp ridges pulling ourselves up by the roots of trees. Heartbreaking to get to the crest and see another crest in front of one. Good training for the future as we were to find. Frank Bedggood developed a sore leg - gave him the usual razzle - he complained through the whole trip. However, when we returned to Wau the Doc told us that he had what is now called a stress fracture, and put his leg in plaster. We did feel guilty!!! Late afternoon with the rain pouring down and Brendon Weddall felt poorly so Gerry Middleton and I dropped back and took his gear. Suddenly there were no more ridges, but just a mud slide down to the river and flat ground. Gerry took off sliding down - heard a scream and when I reached him found that a stick sticking up had interfered with his fundamental orifice.

We made camp for the night, fed, posted a guard and Bill and I retired into ground sheets. We had stripped off completely, our clothes were sodden and we hung them on a bush. About 2 am - we were due on guard at 4 am - we woke up and were floating in water. Rain was bucketing down and it was freezing. It was the last time we took our clothes off while sleeping. We didn't imagine the Japanese would be silly enough to wander around in the rain at night. We set out the next morning cold and wet after a cold breakfast and up to our ankles in mud. We had had sprigs put on our boots and they were a godsend. Continued up the track, at times skirting ravines with a couple of hundred feet drop to the river below. At times wading through rivers, leeches were the main problem - certainly collected a few. According to our map, these were really only sketches made from maps by the gold miners, we were getting close to Mubo where the Japanese were in occupation. We came to a divide in the track and took the left fork for some way. Fortunately Lt. McKenzie had a further look at the map and realised that we were heading for Mubo. Backtracked and moved to the right, would have stirred up a hornets nest if we had progressed up the left track. All that day we had been moving in patrol mode with forward scout out and rearguard, also taking it in turns to carry the Brens. In late afternoon we came to a forward patrol of the 5th Coy. Made the comment that "we were stirring up the Japs by moving in that area" One of them acted as guide and took us into Skindiwi, the base camp. Arrived after dark where a cup of hot black tea and sugar, hot bully beef and biscuit stew did wonders for us. We were billeted in a multi-tier hut (3 tiers of bunks) and slept well, also helping with the guard.

We stayed all that day and left the next morning for Wau. This had been the main track to Salamaua in more peaceful days. Not a lot of climbing but plenty of mud and at times crossing over abyss down to rushing rivers on greasy logs, and one rope suspension bridge. Water was no problem as there were plenty of pissers to the side of the track. While moving around we exercised control over consumption of water because in some areas it meant a long trek down to the water of about half an hour, and even longer coming back. When using water from rivers we sterilised it with our choline tablets. Eventually we passed through The Summit (on top of the range at the back of Wau) and then Ballams (named after a pioneer) and came out onto Kunai slopes with Wau spread out below us. We arrived back at our quarters which was like coming home. A few days later we all went down with diarrhoea - a continuous stream to the latrines. Bedgy was the most in trouble as he had had his leg put in plaster and night-time excursions were a problem. There was many a fall.

After this we were sent up to Mt. Kaiundi (the hydraulic mining area) and we stayed at the hotel there. Can remember enjoying some tins of evaporated milk, the first we had had in months. Mined and panned myself some gold there but lost the bottle later. Not far from there lived a tribe of the Kukakukas, very short people, about 3 to 4 feet in height. Despite their size they were the most lethal headhunters in New Guinea. Fortunately they didn't try it out on us.

Christmas was approaching and headquarters made some Christmas cards for us which we sent home. We also had a sports day organised at the swimming pool and had inter-platoon races. Swam in the backstroke race myself. Christmas Day and Red Cross parcels turned up. We had a Christmas dinner which was a change from the bully beef. Supply planes had flown the goodies into Wau. January arrived and we were told to get ready as we were to move up to Skindiwi and from there together with the 5th Coy. we were to raid Mubo. This was the real thing and time to put our training to use.

We got everything ready as we had done on the patrol. I decided to take my gas cape to sleep in, being airproof it was warm inside it. The 2 inch mortars were not to be used as we had found out from the 5th Coy. that they were useless in the jungle as the leaves and branches triggered the fuse and the bombs exploded in midair. We set out and between Ballams and the Summit my legs gave out, still had some diarrhoea. Fortunately they realised I was missing and one of the blokes came back for me. Myself, Jimmy May and I think Bedgy were ordered to stay the night there and move on the next day while the rest of the section went ahead. What a night!! We were up about 4000 feet and the hut was in cloud. Just after it became dark a thunder storm started and we were in the middle of it. The telephone was ringing, and lightning was rushing up and down our rifles. We stood in the middle of the hut and watched the display waiting for the lightning bolt to hit us. Lightning was flashing all around the hut. Eventually it stopped and we managed a little sleep.

Next morning to Skindiwi where we started to get ready for the raid. A model of the area had been made and we were given the plan. 5th Coy. was to move in on the left and 7th Coy. from the right. Headquarters was to be at the saddle, a feature at the peak of the ridges. A Platoon was to be in ambush position between the Saddle and Mubo. B & C Platoon were to carry out the raid. It was a winding track to the saddle with a ravine on the right side. Arrived there and headquarters was setting up with command post and R.A.P. post and stacks of food and ammunition. These had been brought forward by carrier line. The native carrier lines were controlled by ANGAU officers with man loads apportioned by weight. If I remember correctly 40 pounds per man. Two-man loads carried on a pole were used for such things as No.11 set and the charger. When an ANGAU officer was present we had no control over the natives, although we did provide escorts. There were also police boys attached to us. These were trained men and recruited from as far away as Raboul and Bouganville. They were dressed in a lap-lap and shirt and carried a .303 rifle and haversack and web equipment. They had strict control over the cargo men and stood no nonsense from them. We also used the police as forward scouts on patrol. They seemed to be able to smell the Japanese some distance off. We had been issued with a booklet before we left Australia containing phrases in Pidgin English and the Malayan language. We soon picked up the language and a little more, particularly the phrases and words with sexual meanings. We had already lost the refining presence of women. We also had gained knowledge of bushcraft and methods of moving through the jungle.

One Section moved forward from the saddle to our position about 15-20 minutes walk forward. We were on the lower end of the ridge which connected to the Lababia ridge. The ridge ended in a bowl shaped depression with high ground to left and right facing the main track. The latter was on the edge of a ravine with a sheer drop to the river. 2 Section was further up the ridge and 3 Section was above them forming an ambush in depth with 1 Section the base on the track. Our role was to provide rearguard protection for B & C Platoons and also to cover them on eventual withdrawal. We also provided a screen for headquarters.

We set to and dug our slit trenches. A Sub-section to the left and B Sub-section to the right. Lt. McKenzie and myself were in the centre (I was section runner) A new weapon had been added to the section armament, and Frank Bedgood won the prize, perhaps because he had been in the permanent coastal artillery at Queenscliff before the war started. The weapon was the rifle grenade launcher. We was issued with a Lee-Enfield .303 which had seen the light of day in World War I. The barrel was bound in heavy copper wire and the cup fitted over the muzzle. It would not fit on the Ross-Canadian rifle. The grenade was standard but had a 7 second fuse and the cartridge to expel the grenade was like a blank cartridge but with a bigger charge. It solved the problem of the 2 inch mortar and did not explode when it hit leaves. Frank was a whiz with it - he could always put it in the right spot. We had also been issued with a couple of machetes for jungle bashing - handy when confronted with 'wait-a-whiles', a spiky vine.

We settled in for the first night, I had the RAP bag and had a busy time treating itching sores caused by leeches which had attached to us while wading through rivers. Then had our meal of bully and biscuits before it became dark. Captain Bowen had made his headquarters (platoon) in our area. The mosquitos were alive and well, no mosquito nets so relying on the quinine to keep the malaria at bay. The main attack was for the next morning at first light and we were stood to early. We could hear the sounds of the automatic weapons and the rifles through the morning. About 11 am I was sent with a message to the Saddle, a busy area. I made the trip back later in the afternoon and duly arrived back at the ambush position. I could hear firing up on the ridge. Came to the first slit trench and was told to go to ground. Here was I, with my pack and rifle at the bottom of the dell and only my pistol with which I wasn't too good at 20 paces, and the Japanese about to come around the corner of the track, at about 60 paces. Suddenly a large Alsatian appeared on a lead and about a dozen very large Japanese marines dressed in their light coloured uniforms appeared. Next thing Jimmy May opened up with the Bren and the Alsatian and eight of them disappeared over the edge of the ravine. Somebody killed another one and he was dragged around the corner by the other three. Then there were shots from the B Sub-section as I remember Frank lobbed a couple of grenades over the corner of the track. Got myself down to the boss and reported and gave the message to him. Getting towards dusk the firing was hotting up and I was sent back to the Saddle with another message. I was using a track which was inland from the main track and this meant some climbing up and down - not too bad. The R.A.P. was busy when I arrived at the Saddle as the wounded were coming in. Reported in and then made the trip back again. Eerie on the track on ones own. Reported back and there was firing up the hill from us and from B Sub-section (Cpl. Gerry Middleton). Later in the night Captain Bowen was wounded wandering in the dark behind B Sub-section. He was pulled out and taken back to the Saddle. Before midnight I was sent back with another message - this time went by the main track (less rough) Arrived after midnight and Capt. Bowen had died - R.A.P. very busy. Reported in and then made the trip back again. Morning came and grabbed a quick breakfast. At this stage we had tinned M & V to supplement the 'bully' - alright but on the track didn't stick to the innards for more than about 2 hours - the 'bully' was more energy sustaining. During the morning went back with another message and I was going up the hill at the back of our position and there was Bluey from 2 Section. He was notorious for carrying a couple of billy cans dangling from his pack which made an unholy row on the track. 2 Section used him as a de-facto cook. Anyway here was Bluey sitting up against a tree, bullets whizzing around him from a couple of snipers up in trees. I said "Get out" and he replied "Just like a ruddy shooting galley". I left. Quick trip there and back and surprised to see the whole section on the bank in the A sub-section area. Told that the position had become untenable. There was a woodpecker covering the whole area. Max Nunn and Arthur Jones (who had attempted to get Max out of the slit trench) were dead. The section had orders to pull out. Asked where my pack and rifle were, informed that they were down in the depression under the muzzle of the woodpecker - wasn't about to

rescue them. So for two and a half months I had what I stood up in, an M & V tin and piece of bamboo made a handy dixie and spoon. Fortunately there was a spare rifle available when we returned to Skindiwi.

One funny tale concerned Ted McGrath - he had been given a British .45 revolver of 1st World War vintage plus ammunition from the same era. It was a veritable cannon and when fired had a kick like a mule and one disappeared in a cloud of red smoke from old powder. He had the revolver on the steps of the slit trench and intended to use it if a head appeared over the edge. Sure enough during the night just such an event occurred and what did Ted do, in the panic he forgot to use the revolver and used his rifle instead. Never forgave himself.

We moved back to the Saddle and we about the last to arrive. Food was being handed out before it was destroyed and had a good feed. We were to supply the rearguard and eventually moved off down the track to Skindiwi, being followed part of the way by the Japanese. There were a few shots but we kept well ahead of them. Settled in at Skindiwi and the two platoons of 5th Coy. returned to Wau. Their other platoon had been down on the Markham. Thus we became responsible for the protection of Wau for any attack down the main track from Mubo.

During these weeks of January following our first combat experience we settled in to a routine of patrolling, sometimes with one, two or three men and sometimes with a fighting patrol. These patrols extended down the main track to Mubo and out of the rear of the camp to Black Cat track. Our expertise in patrol technique improved and map making of the tracks we travelled on became routine. For the time being these became our maps. Later aerial photography was used to give us maps of the various areas. Before the raid Lionel Lowndes (Sig.Sergeant) had been sent to a watching post above Salamaua as a coast watcher. He had a hectic time there. We had another lone patroller (Charlie?) He would disappear for days and return with information of Japanese positions for 1 Section of which he was a member. The story goes that one time just on dusk and out of food, he was watching a Japanese camp. They were lined up at the cookhouse and he joined the line and got his serve.

There were two others in the 1 Section, cousins from Western Australia. They had been members of the 2/11 in the Middle East and not exactly young. They patrolled together and developed a good routine when in trouble. They used to interchange, one throwing a grenade and then passing back through the other one who fired his Tommy Gun. They used this routine and escaped when in trouble. Counter ambush techniques were practiced. We had been given the method at the Prom before we left. It was supposed to have been brought back by people who had escaped from Singapore. We had the forward scout out in front then a sub-section and a Bren then the Lieutenant with Signaller (if we had one) and the R.A.P. man then the 2nd Sub-section. When fire opened the rear sub-section went straight off the track at right angles, usually uphill. Then they turned in towards the ambush and opened fire. The method worked successfully. Being forward scout was a nerve tingling experience.

During these weeks supplies were brought to us by carrier lines and men were able to practice their pidgin. Their staple diet was rice, they consumed large quantities of it. Without them we wouldn't have been able to exist. Then the balloon went up - the Japanese attacked from Salamaua and Mubo - first down the Black Cat Track and then heading onto an old German Missionary track which had become overgrown. This track brought them into the back of Wau and avoided Bulolo, the track there being guarded. We received the news by radio. The 6th Battalion of the 17th Brigade had been flown in and the 3rd Independent Coy. A company of the 6th was sent to the Crystal Creek area and another Coy. to the Black Cat Track plus the 3rd back to Wau.

Brendan (Yank) Weddall was to act as a guide to the 6th Battalion Coy. We didn't see him again until the siege was over.

Consequent on all these events we were isolated, and surrounded at a distance. Standing patrols were sent out and 1 Section was assigned to an area about 30 minutes walk out the back of the camp. It was sited on a cliff which led down to a river which eventually led down to the Black Cat Track. Set to digging slit trenches, a stony area and took ages with the entrenching tools. Ended up digging as far as we could and then built a parapet of stones in front. Water was a problem as was 1/2 hour down to the river and a bit longer coming back. Water bottles had to serve for drinking and washing. We would stand to at dawn every morning and small patrols would go out during the day. Clothing stayed on permanently and at this stage I learned not to take off my socks until I had a new pair - the old socks stunk from being wet all the time. At this stage we mostly wore shorts - malaria control wasn't as strict then and quinine was served up daily. After two weeks we were relieved and came into Skindiwi to learn that our company Sergeant Major had been killed that day during an airdrop. A case of bully beef had hit him and bisected him.

Air drops were to become the only way of getting supplies to us. An area had been cleared on the Wau side of the camp. The area was about 75 yards square. If the drop missed this area it was scattered down the steep slope and the ravine on the other side. We admired the pilots of the Kai bombers, they had to come in at a sharp angle about 100-200 feet up and then pull out sharply to escape running into the hill at the back. Dropping was at a primitive stage - parachutes were only used for dropping such objects as wireless sets (we still called them wirelesses in those days). Ammunition was wrapped in blankets as also the grenades. The fuses for the grenades were dropped separately just in case they exploded on contact with the ground. The trick was to find enough fuses to arm the grenades or vice versa. The 303 ammunition was liable to damage so the Bren magazines were loaded immediately after the drop. The rounds were tested by dropping them into the breech end of a spare barrel. The remainder was used in the rifles. The best we did from a drop was 25% of the whole - not a good average. Also the bully beef tins in the main were battered with any bad ones eaten immediately. Tins of biscuit (in soldered tins about 2 foot square) when opened revealed fragments used for making biscuit porridge. At another drop one of the planes crashed into the hill. Alf Monsen, against orders from Major McAdie, entered the cabin and one man was still breathing. The rest were dead. He pulled him out, and brave thing as there was fuel spilling out from the tanks and around the hot engines. It was daunting to be standing on the edge of the drop zone as the parcels came crashing down. We learnt to stand behind a tree for protection. We had to keep an eye on the drop in order to see where the bundles came to rest.

During this period Lt. McKenzie had been promoted to Captain and was OC of A Platoon. Len Montgomeri was promoted to Lt. and took charge of 1 Section. He remained so until the end of the war. We enjoyed our break at the main camp with only day and night guards to do. At night our position was on the Mubo side of the camp. The floor of the jungle was covered in fluorescent bark fragments and we used these as an indicator if anyone disturbed them. Also the area was infested with fireflies, a pretty sight, kept us occupied while on guard.

One night Tokyo Rose sent us a message - to the Bearded Barbarians at Skindiwi - we had all grown beards as no razor blades. When we were relieved had to shave the beards. One blade per section, I was last, plenty of blood. The signal boys used to listen at night to Tokyo Rose, she played good music

After a week we moved out to our outpost above the river. One day Bernie Winter, Ted Light and myself were called in by Cpt. McKenzie and told we were leaving the next morning for a 3 day patrol along the Black Cat Track towards Wau. We decided to travel light, with haversack and enough food for the three days. Bernie and I had our pistols and Ted carried his Tommy Gun and we each had 2 grenades. One water bottle each would have to last the three days. The object of the patrol was to travel parallel to the track in close proximity and to observe movement on the track. What a high powered patrol - a Sergeant, Corporal and Lance Corporal.

We set out early on the next day and made our way down the river bed. There was a low flow so it was a dry walk down the stony boulders of the river. Well before we approached the track we branched off diagonally and scrub-bashed until we were within about 100 yards of the track. We then proceeded for the rest of that day. We heard voices every now and then and observed that these were small groups mostly proceeding towards Mubo, some were wounded. At nightfall we moved further away from the track and camped the night wrapped in our gas capes after a cold meal of bully beef. Up at daybreak and travelled for another half a day and came on a high feature which looked across a valley to another feature over which the track passed. There was a stationary group of Japanese on the track and through the binoculars we were able to observe what appeared to be a Senior Officer seated on a chair with about 20 other personnel around him. We observed that there were only a few men proceeding towards Wau most of the traffic was the other way. This appeared to indicate withdrawal. Talking to Brendan Weddall recently and he mentioned that he took a 6th Battalion patrol in the reverse direction and that we weren't far from each other, the dates seemed to coincide.

After lunch we decided to spend another hour observing and then start back. We reached the river late next morning and Bernie decided to have a look at the track there. He rounded a rocky outcrop and then suddenly about turned. Ted and I were caught by surprise and kept on going. There was a Japanese sentry sitting on a rock. I don't know who had the most surprised look on their faces, he or us. Ted and I wheeled around and back tracked. When we got to the river bed had to climb a wall of scree. Told them to get going and covered them with my pistol. Then they were on the other side I tackled the scree, slid down twice before I made it up eventually, could feel the rifle lined up on my back. Got over on the other side and the other two were hiking up the river bed. As we proceeded we heard a machine gun open up behind us, got out just in time. Arrived back at the base in the afternoon and gave our report. We were asked if we would like a shot of rum - astonishment - naturally said yes - good in the tea. It came from a barrel of navy rum which was 'spirited up' from Wau - 'nobody' know how.

After a few days returned to Skindiwi and settled down. At this period food was in short supply and malaria was taking its toll despite the quinine. Ted Light was sitting one day and happened to push his fingers into his leg, the dint stayed there, we all did the same with the same result. The dreaded berri-berri. Reported to Doc McCracken and he gave us some Vitamin B. In a medical report I read a few years ago, and a survey of the medical problems of war, it was alleged that we made it up. Tropical ulcers and just plain ulcers on our legs were rife, the latter caused by leaches biting and burrowing under the skin. After a rest the section was sent out to our ambush position towards Mubo. The track was lined on the high side by a dozen 3 inch mortar bombs connected to an electric detonator and with electric detonators in each bomb. It was a straight piece of track and would have caused mayhem as the Japanese travelled nose to tail. We spent about two weeks there and were then recalled to Skindiwi with the news that the Japanese had retreated back to Mubo. We heard much later that to get rid of the mortar bombs they were to be exploded. The plunger was pushed and nothing happened - embarrassing. Prior to going to the ambush and being sick of just sitting there doing nothing, I found out that the 2 inch mortar was in the camp. Had

the temerity to suggest to Major McAdie that our patrol go down to the Black Cat Track and take the mortar. An ideal spot for its use. The suggestion was ignored, realised later that our orders were to hold Skindiwi and patrol only.

A Company of the 5th Battalion was the first patrol to get through to us, and we heard all about how Wau was attacked and fighting occurred up to the foot of the strip and some of the planes they came in on. The headquarters people we had left behind had a lot of fun potting off Japanese as they came across the open ground. We returned to Wau and I was put into hospital with diarrhoea (The C.C.S) Had to hand in our gear and when I went to collect it after a week in there found my pistol had been purloined. My record was great, 1 rifle and 1 pistol lost in two months. Bit of a fuss about it from McKenzie. Wau had become a bustling town with planes arriving regularly and tents up everywhere. The unit was billeted at Bulolo in huts with three tiers of bunks and I joined them there. Then decided to have all my other ailments fixed. Found there was a dental unit nearby to extract the tooth which had been aching for a couple of months. Presented to the orderly and lo and behold we had been at school together and had done first year dentistry together before we had joined up. Also had leg ulcers treated at the R.A.P. - the sulphur powder fixed everything - any wounds received that treatment. Triple dye and gentian violet for skin complaints. Anybody that needed a dose around the anus was pointed at the tent opening to enable him to take off. No.9's were for constipation although not much of that. Also aspirin for headaches, a simple R.A.P. bag.

We rested at Bulolo for a couple of weeks and then received the news that we were going up forward again to the Saddle area. The infantry had cleared the tracks as far as the Lababia Ridge. Our role was to hold the Ridge and patrol the area around Mubo and toward Salamaua. We settled ourselves on the ridge overlooking a Japanese position complete with woodpecker and situated on the river. Our headquarters were in the valley back towards the Saddle. We carried out patrols toward Salamaua and in one position we could look down on the town. We also observed a Japanese camp and sighted some women. Everywhere we went we mapped and the compass became part of the equipment carried on patrol. Writing home had returned to normal and we had writing paper again from the Y.M.C.A. and Salvos. While we were cut off there was only toilet paper. During this period on the Ridge we were reduced to two meals a day, biscuit porridge with 1 tin of Bully Beef for breakfast between 18 of us. For tea it was 1/3 tin of Bully and a couple of biscuits. Was so hungry one day at half my tube of toothpaste, frothed up nicely and fixed the hunger pains.

One day we did a full section patrol to the river minus Jimmy May and Frank Rust. They provided cover with the Bren Gun and sprayed the woodpecker. We patrolled the island in the river across from the woodpecker but didn't sight any Japanese, must have gone to ground on the hill at the back of the machine gun position. During this period we had support in two ways which we had never had before. An Indian mountain gun had been brought up by mule train. it was sighted to the left of our position and fired across our front onto the high ground where the Japanese to our right had mortars sighted. If we watched carefully after the projectile was fired we could see the shell going through the air due to the low speed. The other occasion was when we had air support from a squadron of Beaufighter (The Whispering Death) - so called because they were very quiet. They came through in front and below our level - a heartening sight. One afternoon I had gone down to headquarters with a report and on the way back walking up the creek bed received a couple of rounds of mortar fire. Went to ground very quickly in the water. When I arrived back at the position found that they had been treated to a dose as well.

Towards the end of April we received order for the Coy. to report back to Wau. The rumour was that we were going home. On the way back through the Saddle we found the A.S.C. depot was stocked with all sorts of goodies, didn't make us too happy after the diet we had been subjected to for weeks. Arrived back in Wau and we were informed that we weren't going home but were flying back to Port Moresby and then to a place called Bena Bena somewhere in the middle of New Guinea. All the gear was packed and the planes arrived. There were a lot more gear these days than when we first arrived.

Took off down the strip and wheeled away to the south leaving Wau behind. A road was being built from Fly River in order to bring in supplies. Also a Jeep track was being made from Wau to the Summit. It certainly wasn't the small town we had arrived in about seven months ago.

We landed in Port Moresby and were taken to a tented area where we were to spend two days. It was now a thriving military area - base troops and Americans everywhere and two A C Hospitals. Also canteens where we could buy goods - we were given some pay. Walking up the road that day a jeep came towards us - two nurses on board. My eyes nearly fell out. Thus we finished our first session in Papua New Guinea.

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We boarded the DC3's on 29th May 1943 at Jackson's or Seven Mile - can't remember which. There were a significantly greater number of military aircraft around the strip than when we had arrived in 1942. We took off and headed north. Bena Bena was a strip on a plateau called The Highlands. It was bordered to the east by The Bismarck Range and the highest point was approximately 11,000 feet. Further to the east was the Ramu Valley which connected with the Markham Valley which led to Lae. The other side of the Valley (Ramu) was bordered by the Finistene Range and the coast with the main town Madang. The Japanese were in control of the Ramu and Markham Valleys and over to the coast. Bena Bena was a vital airfield for us to hold as if taken by the Japanese they would be able to bomb Port Moresby with much greater ease. Our role was to make base at Bena Bena and from there spread on either side to Kainantu on one side and the Sepik area and Mount Hagen on the other side. The area covered about 130 miles to patrol. We were now being asked to operate as we had been trained for - the areas of reconnaissance, mapping and making ourselves look like a much larger force than we were by active patrolling and the establishment of O.P's. Fighting patrols were a secondary consideration. We had started to do this type of work at Skindiwi.

After an easy flight, this time with fighter escort, we approached Bena Bena. Looking out the window we could see this small strip on grassland with a sheer drop at each end. They do tend to land us at tricky landing strips. Hope the brakes work. One side of the strip was lined with scores of natives waving at the planes. One by one as we circled, a plane would break off and land. Deplaning we collected our gear and gathered our wits - not as hurried as at Wau. The natives were ecstatic - it was like having a day out to see the planes arriving. For some reason Henry Mackieson took out his dentures and within seconds he was surrounded by a delighted and gesticulating crowd. We gathered that they had never seen a denture before. Some of the other men who had dentures also gave a performance and caused great amusement. We found out over the next few days that the bulk of the natives were Chimbus and belonged to outlying areas. The rest were the natives of the village of Bena Bena which was close by to the airstrip. The Chimbus had been brought in by ANGAU to use as carriers. They were harder working than the Bena Bena natives.

We were taken to flat ground near the strip and erected our tents (2 man). What a difference from living in the jungle with no shelter. Felt we were living in luxury. The headquarters area consisted of native built huts clustered at the end of the strip and down a bank - below the huts the ground dropped away to another flat area. The native village was further down. B Platoon were sent out to the west towards the Sepik and Mount Hagen and C Platoon to the east. A Platoon stayed at Bena Bena from where we did day patrols towards the Bismark range. At the same time three man O.P's were established at strategic points to observe any movement of the Japanese towards Bena Bena. Thus a screen was provided to protect Bena Bena airstrip. The O.P's consisted of two footsloggers and a signalman. Daily reports were made back to platoon headquarters and thence to company headquarters. From headquarters information was transmitted back to Moresby on the No.11 set. The set we carried to the O.P was the 204 which was one man portable and had a range of about 40 miles in the best conditions. The range was lowered in mountainous and jungle country. Transmission could also not be made after nightfall. They were prone to faults however they were the best we had.

Soon after we took over at Bena Bena, Major Macadie was made C.O. of the whole area, and Capt. Fred Lomas became our O.C. The Major shifted his headquarters to Gorobe where another airstrip was being constructed. Also 2 Company was flown in and took over in the Mt. Hagen Sepik area. This extended the front covered. Prior to 7 Company arriving Bena Bena Force consisted of a detachment of the 7th Battalion, N.G. VR personnel and RAAF rescue unit, and I have latterly found out that there were six 6 Company troops out on O.P's in two's.

Prior to us arriving there had been increased activity on the other side of the Ramu, and it had been crossed. Also the Japanese were advanced with the construction of a road from Madang to Boyestgina. Consequently we were flown in because it was easier to maintain us than a battalion. We arrived at the end of May 1943. Later in July the 2nd Company was flown in when Japanese activity increased. The estimation was that there were about 10,000 troops at Madang, against about 700 of us.

We settled down to one day patrols and O.P's. One of the O.P's was on high ground at the other end of the airstrip to provide advance warning of air raids of which there had been quite a few on the various airstrips. While at Skindiwi I had been promoted to the dizzy heights of Lance Corporal - an extra sixpence a day. It also saved a fine of Five Pounds if one had to front up to Macadie - standard fine of a spin - hence his nickname of "Spin". The other benefit was the gaining of a Tommy Gun - felt much safer as my scores on the range with a rifle were mostly outers and inners, bullseyes were few and far between.

I was sent up at one stage with two from B Sub Section to the airstrip O.P. We were housed in a grass hut, so comparative luxury. We were there for a week, and were in telephone contact with headquarters. Had managed to scrounge some bicarb of soda and some flour from the 'Babbling Brooks' (Cooks) so I was able to bake some damper in a dixie during the week, a change from the biscuits. Also had some tropical spread, a margarine, bright yellow in colour and not at all like today's margarine. It melted in the heat. Had some excitement one of the days. Twelve Kai bombers were due in with supplies. They arrived and began circling the field. Looking through the glasses we counted 13 planes. The last one was a Japanese sea plane. As the Dougs began to land one by one, we could sense the panic of the pilot. Flying above was a squadron of Lightnings as air cover. As the last Doug came into land the recce plane took off to the east with a Lightning coming in from each side. They enfiladed the Japanese plane, firing together - better than a seat at the pictures.

While we were close to headquarters we had some attention paid to our health. Scrub Typhus had been added to the malaria, mochas, fleas off the rats, leeches and dysentery and diarrhoea. A brown paint was produced to coat the seams of our clothes. This helped to prevent the ticks and fleas from lodging in our clothing. Was also dusted a couple of times with D.D.T.. A bomb (plastic) was issued out which contained an anti-mosquito spray which was useful at night to spray the mosquito net and tent. By this we had been switched from quinine to atebirin being made to chew them. Some bright spark down south reckoned they worked better. We all turned a bright yellow, one benefit couldn't get sunburned with the atebirin in our skin. With all these substances and later when the war finished, swilling carbon tetra chloride (dry cleaning fluid) to knock over the hookworm infestation, we were certainly exposed to carcinogenic substances.

Had the chance, a couple of times, of going hunting with a Chimbu native. He needed a Bird of Paradise for the feathers used in their head dresses. We tracked quietly through the jungle, my admiration of his bushcraft was tinged with envy. He was creeping through the scrub armed only with a bow and arrow expecting to kill a bird 30 or 40 feet up in a tree - the mind boggles. We eventually sighted a bird, its plumage magnificent, and he dispatched it with one arrow, hitting it just below the neck. This was essential so that the plumage wasn't damaged. One day had a couple of frights myself. Proceeding along a track and heard a wild thrashing the scrub. My thoughts were either a pig or a Japanese (unlikely). Suddenly a cassowary burst onto the track with a wild look in its eye. I ducked for cover. Later walking on the track again a snake slithered across, dispatched it with a modern weapon, the Tommy Gun.

Over the previous months there had been air raids on Bena Bena and other airstrips on the plateau and one occurred while we were in residence there. Since Wau I had been waiting to see a dentist again. One had arrived at Bena Bena the week before and set up shop in one of the huts. Eventually got in to see him and he had just started to examine me when the air warning red signal went. Informed him that I was leaving, he said no panic, I left. I ran down the hill between the huts to the slit trenches at the bottom of the flat, about a 50 yard run. On my right I could see the first Zero fighter bomber coming in and our paths were going to bisect about the slit trenches. Went into a flat dive and hit the trench. Five other bodies in there so lay on top of them. The bombs hit either side of me and felt the hot metal fanning my trousers. The next one came in and as he passed over at about 50 feet dipped his wing and grinned at me - gave him a raspberry.

I looked up the hill to the huts and other planes were strafing and had set some of them on fire including the dentist's hut. Hoped he had left. Also sighted a jeep rolling down the road from the strip. An American Officer from the radar station near the strip had left the jeep on the run when another plane came in, with the jeep still rolling. I gave him a wave, and he dove into our slit trench - seven in a two man slitto. The run finished and a hand came up from down below - "Anyone for chewing gum?" The American had made his way to the bottom - don't ask me how. It was a day of hilarity tinged with sadness as on the next run two piccaninies made a run for it and were killed by one of the bombs. The raid over we emerged out of the trenches - I looked up the hill where the Q store (tent) was situated and there was Con Hughes outside stoking a fire - found out later he was burning the Q records - we were all in the clear for all the gear we had lost. Found out the dentist was O.K. but he had lost all his gear. Didn't see a dentist again for 6 months.

The Chimbis in this area were headhunters and had been brought under partial control about 1939 by district officers. Fights quite often occurred between villages, and one day on patrol we were able to witness a "fight" Each group lined up in front of their village. With a great deal of yabbering and waving of

spears they threatened each other. After quite a time there was a rush forward and arrows were fired and spears thrown - no damage done. This day we had 2 Police Boys with us and when the charge started they let out a yell and rushed forward firing their 303's over the heads of the waring tribes. There was a sudden dispersal back to their villages and all was quiet. We moved on. Another day 2 of us were taking a kai line out to one of the platoons and as we were proceeding along the track in open country, we were greeted by a shower of arrows. We were passing near a village and evidently the carriers were enemies. I put a burst over their heads (against order from ANGAU) which settled the argument quickly. Took a while to settle the carriers down again. One of the services our medical section carried out for the natives was inspecting them for yaws. A disease akin to syphilis. It was most disibilitating and rife in the various tribes in the district. Some supplies of the drug were found in one of the German missions which were dotted through this area, and then further supplies were flown in when the planes came. There was also a problem of taking kai lines down into the Ramu area and towards the coast. We were at about 4000 feet and the Ramu valley was about 2000 feet. The natives were liable to get pneumonia and also malaria particularly the more virulent forms which were found at the lower levels. This presented a problem when we eventually moved to the Ramu valley as the lines had to be returned on the same day that they arrived.

At the end of June A platoon received orders to move to Kainantu to relieve the 2/7 Battalion group who were eventually flown out to a well earned leave. The track went to the east over Kunai country and through jungle areas. Kainantu was in open country and nearby to the village was a large Lutheran mission. There was a large house and hospital and native quarters. Attached were stock yards. Down the hill were our quarters with huts and bamboo beds - luxury after sleeping on the ground. Below us was the native village and nearby the airstrip. Zebu cattle roamed the area. We settled in and commenced patrolling. About half an hour walk to the east was Aiyuan which had been a coffee research station. There was a native village there and an airstrip with the wreck of a Douglas dive bomber alongside it. To the north-east was Arona a native village and nearby another village called Arona 2. These two villages were regularly visited by Japanese patrols and the natives were under the influence of the Japanese. Captain McKenzie took a patrol of one of the other sections to Arona 2 and ambushed the Japanese.

One section was sent out and by a circular route reached an observation post across the valley from Arona 1. There was a small grass hut there which had been used by the 2/7th Battalion. Up the hill was a native village. They weren't too friendly so we treated them as potential's to lead in the Japanese. After a few days myself and Frank Beddgood and a signaller were left there to man the O.P. with a fortnight's rations and a radio which was used to report in at 4.30 each night - coded messages. This was just before sundown. At night we ringed the hut on the various paths with hand grenades with the fuses cut down to about half a second. These were rigged to trip wires and inserted in old cans. The grenades then had the pins taken from them. Each morning the grenades were removed, the trick was not to lose the pins. We decided to take the risk and slept through the night with web equipment on and weapons in our hands. The Japanese had a habit of surrounding huts after being led in by natives, and opening fire through the doorway. I cut an escape hole through the grass at the back of the hut. The O.P. was down the hill from the hut in dense scrub and on a slope overlooking the valley. The twelfth day we spotted at about 4.30pm a patrol of Japanese coming across the valley. I quickly wrote out a message and sent it over in 'clean' - didn't have time to encode it before dark. Received the order to pull out by some new Lieutenant - didn't give me the chance to discuss it. Dark fell and I decided to go up the valley instead of the round about route. Eventually arrived back at the base the following morning and received a rocket for coming up the valley. Water off a duck's back.

We settled in at the base over the next week. During our absence a jungle juice brew had been made from dehydrated potatoes, yeast that had been found in the mission, and sultanas. The brew was in two 5 gallon drums. It was decided to have a party. One of the cattle was shot - talk about marksman - it took about 10 shots to down it. The carcass was hung under a tree and one of the men who had been a butcher chopped it up. The natives thought it was a wonderful day. They claimed the offal, and had a feast. They were also given some of the meat. The juice was strained through an old mosquito net and came out looking like potato soup. The brew was broached about 3.30pm before tea. Had two mugs before tea and was feeling light-headed. The meat was eventually cooked - talk about tough - must have been all the chasing before it was shot. Managed to consume another 4 pint mugs after tea - had to hold the back of my neck to swallow it - don't ask me why? Thought about 7 pm I would wander down and visit Dick Love in the R.A.P. They were still drinking. After about half an hour I was feeling drunk. Wandered back up the hill towards the Sig. Hut and collapsed about 20 yards from it. Jerry Middleton was walking down the track soon after and tripped over me. Slung me over his shoulder and all I could say was "I want to be sick" All I heard in reply was "Let her go" Was taken back to my hut and laid on my bed. Ted Light was in the bed on the other side of the hut. Lay there paralytic - could hear all the talk going on outside but couldn't move. Suddenly I heard a choking sound and managed to turn my head and saw a geyser coming up from Ted's mouth, and then falling back on his face - he was choking. Managed to yell out and fortunately somebody heard and came in and rolled him over.

There were a sick lot of bodies the next morning and it took a couple of days to fully recover. The Japanese could have walked in and taken us that night - can't remember any guards on that night. Soon after this I was one who was sent to the Mission to have a break for a week. All were taking a turn. Had a good rest. The R.A.P. was set up there and catered for any hospital cases. We had a feed of roast pork while there. There were pigs in the compound. It was dispatched by bullets from a pistol. Note the bullets - there was a lot of chasing around the sty before it met its end. We had our ex-butcher on hand so all was well from then on.

Soon after this 1 Section patrolled the Arona area in the roundabout way. When we arrived the forward scout sighted Japanese in our old O.P. position. They were preparing to pull out so we bided our time until they were gone. We set up camp and stayed there for a week. During this time we patrolled to Arona's 1 and 2 and found evidence of Japanese patrols. The natives were very edgy in Arona 2. The local village natives weren't too happy either. We had gained a new hygiene sergeant in the company and he accompanied our patrol. He had recently come from Australia. The day after we arrived he took ill, and his testicles swelled. He had been in contact with a case of mumps and never been infected before. He had plenty of sympathy in between the ribbing. We were eventually relieved by an O.P. party and returned to Kianantu. At one stage after this did a patrol back to the area which had been an experimental coffee plantation before the war, and was the forerunner of today's coffee industry on the highlands. There was also a small patrol there together with some goats in the residence so we took the opportunity to sample the meat. I think the meat was too fresh as the chops were a trifle tough. Another time had to make a trek to Arona area with information and ran into a storm and pulled in the night at a native village. I hadn't brought food so they kindly supplied me with some cooked kau-kau and a sago pastry. I certainly enjoyed them. The next morning I saw the method used to get the sago from the swamp. Very interesting.

About the beginning of August the platoon returned to Bena Bena. One day I was out on the track to the north on a guard post. I was sitting under a shrub out of the sun when I heard the din of planes approaching. The next thing flights of planes were passing over in droves. There was a conical hill to the north of Bena Bena and the planes came up to this and turned at right angles. We found out later that this

was the 200 Bomber raid on Wewak which destroyed many planes on the ground. The conical hill was used as a means of navigation and the American navigators weren't trustworthy. Anyway here was I gaping up with my mouth open in astonishment when suddenly a tailgunner opened fire. The next thing I was surrounded to .5's hitting the ground. He either was cleaning his guns or thought I was a Japanese. I think I was in the cone of fire. Disappeared under the shrub promptly looking like a little ball.

About this time we received news that we were to lose the name of Independent Company and were to be called the 2/7 Cavalry Commando Squadron, and part of the 7th Division Cavalry Commando Regiment, however later the word Cavalry was dropped.

Soon after this we were sent to an O.P. (that is 1 Section) in the Bismarck Range and about 8000 feet up. The plateau was at about 4000 feet. It was a tough climb up and the lungs were working overtime as the atmosphere become more rarefied. When we reached the O.P. we were gasping. It took a few days to adjust to the height. However the climb was worth it to see the most magnificent view I have seen. We looked over the flat floor of the Ramu Valley - the Ramu and the Gusap Rivers were below us. Across the other side of the valley was the Frinistene Range and not far beyond that the coast with Madang to the northwest. The valley was kunai country and very little vegetation.

A few days later we received an order from headquarters to send a three man patrol to the Ramu River and to investigate Burn Burn, a small village on the other side of the river. Gerry Middleton, Frank Rust and myself went. We arrived at the Ramu River just on dusk. It was running at about 10-12 knots. There was a lean-to built by the Japanese on the river bank. It had a raised platform for a bed. We had tea, and then into bed with the mosquitos. It was an unwelcome experience after being without them for sometime. I woke up at first light. The other two were still snoring. it let my eyes wander and looked up at the roof and saw a large snake draped on the frame. I let out a yell and I have never seen three bodies move with such alacrity. On closer examination we found it was a tree snake and harmless, however we stayed clear of it. I had a healthy respect for snakes, also the giant golden backed spiders (about 6-8 inches across from the end of the legs) They spun huge webs from tree to tree and hung within the web. Not pleasant to run into them in the dark, don't know whether they were poisonous.

After breakfast we surveyed the river. it was running fast. We had brought a roll of sig wire with us so I stripped off my web equipment and took the wire across the other side. Finished up about 50 yards down river from the others, but made the other side. Gerry came across with my gear and Tommy Gun. We told Rusty to stay on the other side so we could get back. He carried on like a two bob watch - wanted to come with us and we ignored him. Burn Burn was about a quarter of a mile in from the bank. We approached it from either side of the track. The Japanese had been there - their usual latrine in a pool near the first hut presented it's smell. We searched the huts but all were empty, but plenty of evidence they had been in occupation. We went further inland, but didn't find any further signs. We came back to the river and walked about quarter of a mile upstream. hence we found a rocky section of the river which made a possible ford. Gerry went across first and his long legs kept him out of trouble, although it was difficult. I fell over twice on the way over but managed to hold onto rocks. Eventually made it. We rejoined Rusty - he still wasn't speaking to us. We made our way back to the O.P. A few days later we were looking down at the valley when we saw the most amazing sight. It was the 7th Division advancing up the valley, and we were looking down on what appeared to be 3D maps with the thousands of troops proceeding in columns up the valley. The Douglas's were flying at about 500 feet so they were below us - what a sight.

The next day we received orders by radio to proceed down to the valley the following day and there to join up with the rest of the company. We were going to join the 7th Division in its procession up the valley and were now under the command of the division headquarters. About this time in October we were told that Bena Force under Fergus McAdie was to be disbanded and the other troops would take over the defence of the air strips. The squadron assembled down in the valley on the main track over the next couple of days. The Gusap River had been bridged so we no longer had to cross raging rivers. Big kai lines had brought all our gear from Bena Bena. We were sitting on the side of the track when we received a visit from the great man himself - General Vasey. He stayed for quite a while chatting to us and in the course of conversation asked if we would like anything. A cold beer was the first choice - unavailable - the next choice was steak and fresh bread. The aide was called over and within a couple of hours we had frozen steak (boxes of) fresh bread, butter and eggs. A fabulous barbeque thoroughly enjoyed. It was also good to be with masses of people again. The 7 Div. troops were coming through in droves. Also to see trucks and jeeps again.

The next day we started to move up to Dumpu. We didn't have to worry about the enemy - all had been cleared before us. The track passed though 6-8 foot kunai. It was like being in an oven and just as well we had plenty of water. For the past two months I had had diarrhoea and dysentery off and on. it started up with vengeance in the heat. Also we had had bouts of malaria despite the medication. With the doctor with us again I took the opportunity to see him. He prescribed sulpha guanadine - a relatively new drug - 120 tables at a time - I felt like a pill factory. We arrived at Dumpu and spent the night there. The strip was a hive of activity with planes coming and going. it had been put into operation in 24 hours. We could also hear the artillery firing up into the hills to the north and onto a place called Shaggy Ridge. Also Boomerangs were operating from Nadzab and bombing the area. Next day we moved to a place called Kesawai, and set up camp there. Our role was to patrol to the west and north and protect the flank of the division. We commenced patrolling and soon ran into Japanese patrols. During this week the dysentery started up again, so at the end of the week I was shipped out to Port Moresby. Went to Dumpu and was flown to Nadzab. I stayed the night there with an American airforce unit. My eyes fell out at the sight of the food. The usual metal divided trays, fresh meat and vegetables and tinned fruit and custard with plenty of fresh bread and butter. How the other half lived well.

The next day was on a plane for Port Moresby. As we were passing Poppendebte the pilot told us that he was going to climb to 12,000 feet to get over a storm front. The pilots put on their oxygen masks, we were left gasping for breath. Thank goodness the pilots had oxygen. We landed at Port Moresby and was driven to an A.G.H. where I was taken to a ward and put to bed. What luxury, hadn't been in one since April 1942. Sheets and pillowcases felt superb after blankets or nothing at all. But the most glorious sensation was having a hot shower - stayed under it for about 20 minutes. Little did I know that I was standing on a time bomb. The next couple of days was put through tests and suffered the sigmoidoscope. The physician didn't see much as they forgot to wash me out. I was put on hold but 5 days after arriving together with other 6 Battalion men in the ward, went down with a massive dose of tinea on the feet. The shower room was the culprit. To think I had spent months with wet feet and to come into hospital and get a dose of tinea was the end. Gradually the dysentery disappeared and the doctors forgot about that - didn't remind them. I spent the next month in hospital having my feet treated. There was a whole ward full of skin complaints. The chap next to me in the ward was one of Capt. Sherlock's company at Wau - one of the lucky ones to get out. At the end of November I had visits from 1 Section - the squadron was down in Port Moresby and we were going home.

A few days later was discharged from hospital and rejoined the Squadron. It was in camped at one end of, I think Jackson's Strip, which had become a huge aerodrome since we had last seen it. There was a small hill above us and we were at the foot. One night at about 2 am there was a terrific crash, and on investigating we found that a bomber had hit the top of the hill on take-off and fortunately had carried on to the other side. If it had stayed on our side the squadron would have probably been wiped out as it was a steep hill. Unfortunately the crew had died. Had the luxury of visiting a canteen and as we had received some pay, was able to buy some things. Bought some cartons of cigarettes to take home to the poor rationed people at home. One section received some bad news during this week - they were to go to the Sepik to join up with Moss Troop - or attempt to do this. I asked to go but was told "No". Eventually 57 people went, led by Capt. McKenzie. As it turned out they expedition was a waste of time. While we were in Port Moresby we found the souvenir industry in sales to the Americans was booming. The R.A.M.E. were doing a great trade in Japanese swords. Real ones were in short supply so the technicians were making them out of jeep springs.

The day came when we were told to move and we were driven to the wharves, and embarked on the S.S. Katoomba - one of the old coastal passenger ships. It was a strange world indeed after 15 months in the jungle. The first thing was to find a place to sleep. We were told that we could sleep below in the cabins or sleep on deck in a hammock. Selected the latter as didn't fancy the sealed atmosphere below and its attendant smells of food and body odour because the portholes were sealed. Felt lonely with the section up on the Sepik even though there were plenty of mates there from other sections. There is no doubt your section was your immediate family. I wished I was with them.

Eventually we were under way. Had put my name down for submarine watch which entailed standing on the ends of the bridge and watching for periscopes. A good lark and we had more run of the ship. It was a good trip back and not too rough, and the food was good. The first night getting into the hammock was a test of patience - it took me 20 minutes to get in - kept falling out the other side. Eventually a sailor showed me how, and spent a comfortable night.

We docked at Cairns and disembarked. From there we were taken to the train station and were told we were going to a staging camp on the Atherton Tablelands. This was strange territory to most of us. We could see the Tablelands in the distance. The train left Cairns travelling across fairly flat country at first and then we began to climb. We could hear the steam engine panting as we progressed higher. We passed over waterfalls and alongside rivers down below, and eventually came to a station, the prettiest I have ever seen. The station was planted with tropical plants and the plants were flowering - a magnificent sight. After a rest there we progressed higher and came to a station called Ravenshoe. Here we detrained and were taken to a prepared camp which we were told was in the 7th Division area. Even though brigades were up in New Guinea the Tablelands had been divided around Ravenshoe for the 6th, 7th and 9th Div., we were encamped in their area. Also on the Tablelands were two A.G.H's - if my memory serves me correctly they were the 2/2nd and the 2/6th.

We settled into camp, and over the next couple of weeks we did camp duties and were rekkitted. I had to hand in my old friend the Tommy Gun - it had become a part of me. We received new uniforms. The standard type - our English battle dress uniforms had disappeared. We were issued with 7 Div. Cavalry colour patches and miniature double diamond patches, so there was quite a deal of sewing required. Strange to wear underpants and singlets again, and had to break in a new pair of boots.

Looking at old photos I am wearing the double diamond colour patch so I think we must have rebelled. It was just as well as we weren't to be in the 7 Div. for long.

The day dawned and we were told that we were going on leave the next day. Leave slips were issued, and we received a pay and most important of all, coupons for petrol and food. I think we received coupons for 2 gallons - supposed to be a month's supply for the civvies. The next morning we were taken to Cairns and boarded the troop train for Brisbane. The train carriages were of timber as most the trains were in those days. The seats were upholstered leather and comfortable. There was a toilet and wash room either side of the aisle at the end of the carriage and outside an observation platform with steps for alighting. We soon made ourselves comfortable and found ways to get a good night's sleep. The luggage racks were large and made a good hammock, and the backs of the seats unscrewed just fitted between the seats and made a good bed for four. I organised myself in the washroom on the floor - nobody used it at night.

During the two day trip to Brisbane we had regular meal breaks at towns. Bundaberg was a good example. The meals were usually organised by the local townspeople - occasionally the army supplied it - what a difference between the ladies cooking and the army babblers. We also took the opportunity in the towns to visit the pubs after eating, and the engine drivers were always kind enough to blow their whistle to warn us when due to leave. There was then a mad rush to the station. We could also make a billy of tea when we stopped. Boiled the water with steam from the engine. The best stop on the whole trip to Melbourne was always Coff's Harbour in New South Wales. We always had bacon and eggs and fresh fish and chips cooked by the local ladies. it was much appreciated. it was hot in the carriages so we kept the windows open - at least we got a breeze. Arriving in Brisbane I made for the telephone as did most of us. Eventually got through to Roma, and told her that I would be home in two days all being well, and the brains not breaking down. Told her to book the wedding for 2 days after we arrived home. The trains did the best for us, and we did arrive home on the morning of the third day.

It was good to be home. Life in the community didn't seem to be much different except for the rationing. Later in the leave visited Victoria Market, and it was a haven of black market activities. American sheets and towels - query courtesy of the American Army - were available without ration tickets, also as an alternative one could do a deal with the tickets and get more than one was entitled. Caved in and bought a set of sheets and pillow cases. The other horrible thing was that there were a lot fewer cars on the road - quite a few with gas producers mounted on the back. Another trick that father-in-law used was to buy een - a form of turpentine which added to the tank expanded the petrol ration. Don't think it did the motor much good eventually. What a joy to sleep in a real bed again despite the stay in hospital. Also to sit down at a table with china and cutlery and to drink out of a glass and china cup. Drink of course was rationed, and there was a rush on it when it arrived in the shops. It paid to stay with the one supplier. On top of this there were black market suppliers - regularly raided by the police. There were slit trenches dug in the parks, plenty opposite the barracks for the stuff there.

Came the day - uniform cleaned and the boots and webbing clean. Bill Kendall (1 Section) was my best man, and we decided to visit the fiance (ex) of my brother who had been killed on a raid to Timor. Set out on push bikes from Caulfield to Malvern. Both became slightly full there, realised it was getting late, the wedding was at 2pm at Wesley Chapel. We weaved back along Dandenong Road and arrived home at 1pm. Panic, but made it to the Chapel by 2.05pm. Fortunately Roma was late. However nearly disaster, fell flat on my back in the chapel, sprigs on the boots and a polished floor don't go together - the ego was bent. After the wedding breakfast (we were allowed to have 30 people which we managed to

organise in 2 days) had a honeymoon in Melbourne. Being the 22nd December no hotels available. The two weeks passed all too quickly and soon the day arrived when we went to Spencer Street to go back to the Tablelands. Went through the same routine, train to Albury, the change to the New South Wales sleeper, then change at Sydney and Brisbane and again at Cairns. Eventually arrived back on the Tablelands where we found that we were now to be part of the 6th Division Cavalry Regiment in the 6th Division and that we were going to a place called Wondecla in the 6th Division area. We arrived to find that the other two squadrons (9 and 10) were encamped already. The regiment had been formed as a reconnaissance unit in 1939 and in the Middle East had been equipped with Bren Gun Carriers. Of course these were of no use in jungle warfare but the division still needed a peace unit. Nine and 10 squadrons were formed from the Middle East members who were left and reinforcements, mostly of the latter. We were to make the third squadron, but were to maintain our independent company establishment, and keep the engineer section and armourer etc. The other squadrons wouldn't have these. Each squadron had its own area and amenities, latrines, showers and mess and cook huts. Regimental headquarters was in a separate area in the middle.

Being one of the first ones back I copped a detail to dig the 20 holer - 4 for the officers and 16 for us. It had to be 20 feet deep. Halfway down we struck rocks. I was glad when it was finished. Gradually all returned, some had applied for transfers to other units, so we received some reinforcements, all had been trained at Cannungra in Queensland - it was the new jungle training school. The Prom had been closed.

We settled down to the boring routine of training, with frequent exercises with the other squadrons as most of them hadn't seen action before or had never acted as foot soldiers. There were plenty of route marches and field training. We were issued with the standard 303 and the relatively new Owen guns. These had to be zeroed and we had to get used to the weapons so there was plenty of range practice. We had arrived back in January and in March I was sent to an N.C.O's school for a fortnight. It was a break from camp routine.

Daily life was taken up by field training and range practice, and spit and polish. At least we had stretchers to sleep on and were dry and the tucker wasn't too bad with plenty of fresh meat and vegetables. Pay nights on a Thursday once a fortnight were a highlight with beer being on tap. The barrels were set up on a trestle table in the lines, not far to walk when it had its effect. Going back to the food, baked beans and tinned sausages were still on the menu, also tropical spread (a deep yellow colour supposed not to melt in the heat) Plenty of plum jam and pineapple and melon jam, and of course fresh bread, and change from biscuits. There was also a canteen where we could buy sweets and sweet biscuits, something we had missed in New Guinea.

There were also regimental duties such as guard duty on the gate, and changing the guard at night. Also regimental parades. The R.S.M became a friend of mine for life one day when I had charge of the guard. It was late in the afternoon and 10 Squadron came back from a route march and I didn't turn out the guard, only necessary when the regiment marched in. About 10 minutes later was told to report to the R.S.M. He asked me what I had done and why and gave him my reasons. He replied that I was correct in what I had done. Next thing I saw him heading for the Major's tent where I believe he ticked him off. Another day he ticked off a Lieutenant on a changing of the guard parade in front of everybody. The poor lieutenant had made a mistake in drill, showed the power of an R.S.M. Apparently he was an ex-guards C.S.M. Little events like this kept us from getting too bored.

One day the officers decided to have a party and bought two sucking pigs from a farmer. Somehow in a raid some of our blokes purloined one of them and slaughtered it. The roast pork was delicious that night. The officers did have one left. There was talk of a court martial but no culprits. As I said before pay night and grog was to be looked on like a party. The beer was shipped up from Cairns and brewed in the brewery there. It had a good old shaking on the way up and of course wasn't that cold. We drank out of old beer bottles converted into "Lady Blarney's". The bottles had the necks cut off. It meant about 2/3 of a bottle per glass. Used to manage 6 of these. Many a night I passed out and Jerry Middleton carted me back to the tent and dumped me on my bed. The main booby trap on these nights was when there were two drunks on either side of a pissaphone, liable to get a boot full. They were ingenious devises - made of galvanised iron with a funnel at the top and a pipe going into a bed of gravel in the ground. A lot better than carting the full drums when on latrine fatigue that we had at Tidal River. Latrine fatigue provided a little light relief at times. To purify the 20 holer we would pour dieseline into the pits and set fire to it. It was bad luck if officers were occupying their section. Many a yell at these times, not to say that we didn't wait for the opportunity. Easy to plead ignorance.

Malaria was still ever present and bodies were carted off to hospital regularly to get the liquid quinine treatment. We made the most of the 3 or 4 days after the quinine took hold, better than tramping around the field and rain forests. Occasionally we were given a nights leave into Wondecla or Ravenshoe and went to the pictures. Made a break from camp. Sports played a big part on Saturdays. Aussie Rules football, hockey, rugby and cricket were the usual sports. I was talked into playing hockey - it was new to me. My shins suffered from the whacks with the hockey sticks every game I played. I didn't ever learn to keep them out of the way. We lost a fellow named Scott during an Aussie Rules football match. He was flattened and received a burst spleen. Rushed to hospital and it was removed. He survived and lived until 1994.

We had one wild man in engineers - can't remember who it was - he was slightly out of control on grog night. He would get an axe and chop a couple of tent poles down - alarming when the tent collapsed - just as well we were 'anaesthetised'. He was normal the next morning. About June or July there was a notice that went up on the notice board calling for volunteers for the paratroopers. As I remember we all put in- we were sick of training. It was to be a force to go in and rescue P.O.W.'s as we advanced up the islands. We were all refused. heard later that the unit was formed but wasn't used. About this time rumours were rife as to where the divisions were going to be used next, and the talk was that the 6th Division was going to be used in the attack on the Philippines. Reading recent histories of the era this rumour wasn't far wrong.

About the end of July the regiment went on a '24 hour' route march. it may have been to wear us down as we were all getting sick of the training and anxious to get back up north again. Can't agree with that feeling at this distance in time but youthful zeal took precedence then. We carried bully beef and biscuits for rations and the R.A.P. bag was much in use as the blisters on the feet were numerous. Most of us had new boots (relatively) and still needed braking in particularly on sealed roads. We made the distance under the time limit.

Rumours were still rife and eventually we were told we were going on final leave. We began to get our gear ready and make sure the uniforms and web equipment were clean and eventually we were notified we were leaving the next day. Malaria was still a problem and men were going down with it. Jimmy Kilner

was lying in his cot and trying to cover up the fact that he had a bout. I got the thermometer out of the R.A.P. kit and took his temperature - it was 106 degrees F plus. He pleaded with me to get some quinine but the temperature was a little high to play around. Felt a heel but reported to the R.A.P. and he was carted off to hospital.

Next morning bright and early we were transported by truck to Innisfail where we were put on the train to Brisbane. We settled in reorganising the carriage around ourselves. Prior to getting on we had gorged ourselves with watermelon, the local farmers had sold them to us. We hadn't been far on the way when Peter Jukes started to get the shakes. His temperature went to 105 F and he threatened to shoot us if we put him off the train. We stripped him and packed him around with wet towels and fanned him. He was a sick boy most of the way to Brisbane but stated to improve just before we reach there. We had pushed some Atebrin into him. At Brisbane I rang through to Melbourne to let Roma know I was on the way and we entrained again for Sydney. Enjoyed our meal at Coff's Harbour, the ladies certainly looked after us. Reaching Sydney we changed trains again having lost the Queenslanders and the New South Welshmen. As I remember the South Australian and West Australian men went via Mildura and then south and west. The usual change at Albury and then we saw the sights of Melbourne in the distance.

Arrived home and the bliss of sheets again and home cooked meals. Then the panic of getting ready for another wedding the next day - I was best man to Jimmy May and Lil. We had a good day and after the wedding breakfast we went to the Federal Hotel and continued boozing on until midnight. Nearly spoiled the honeymoon night. I lasted a week and then down with malaria and sent out to Heidelberg and swallowing the dreaded liquid quinine. I was out there for a week, checked out and had my leave extended for another week. Set out on the train after that week and arrived in Brisbane where I was ordered to the L.T.D. in order to go on the next day. Next morning reported and was told that my papers had been mislaid and I would have to wait. Explained that we were about to go overseas but it had no effect. There was I in Brisbane with not a penny to my name and nothing in the pay book. Managed to exist on free rides into town for a week and then blew my top and the clerk got off his tail and managed to find my papers which had fallen down the back of the drawer in his desk.

Set off for the Tablelands again and of course when I arrived back at camp the regiment had left and there was only the rear guard. I drew my gear and weapon and then we set to work to dismantle the camp. Was detailed with a squad to fill in the 20 holer that I mentioned earlier. Dug it and now I was filling it in. We pulled down the building and removed the seats and then I looked at it and thought that there was an awful lot of shovelfuls to go in. I suddenly remembered there was a canister of explosive in the store. Figured that because the trench was narrow and that if I suspended it part way down that it might collapse the walls. Wired it up and retreated a respectable distance and fired it. Next thing we were showered with a load of dirt and burnt excrement. So much for my bright idea. Picked up the shovels again as we dislodged very little dirt with the charge.

Soon after this the camp was now reduced to a minimum and we received the word that we would be moving out for New Guinea and would be leaving from Cairns. The movement comprised the rearguard of the regiments and various other rearguards from the division. One morning in late October we were taken to Ravenshoe and then to the docks at Cairns where we went on board the troopship S.S.(HMAS) Duntroon. She was one of the newer pre-war coastal vessels operating between Perth and

Brisbane. Organised myself into a cabin but immediately volunteered for antisubmarine duty on the bridge. The atmosphere was a little thick down below and there were 8 of us in the 2 berth cabin.

We eventually sailed and enjoyed our trip through the Barrier Reef area fortunately the weather was calm so no seasickness. We reached the area off Milne Bay and entered the China Straits. What a beautiful sight at dawn - the colours in the sky were superb - a sight that in quieter times tourists paid hundreds of pounds to see. We proceeded along the northern coast keeping a good eye out for submarines as some had been sighted in the area. We heard after that the Japanese were being supplied by submarine. We passed Madang and I thought of the Ramu Valley one of our last areas we had been in on our last trip. We passed Wewak, at that time in the hands of the Japanese, and an area we were to make acquaintance with at a later time. Then there we were off Aitape - our destination. There was no real harbour and seas were running high. We were to go ashore in landing barges.

Aitape had been an isolated village with airstrip and had been used for contact in the Sepik area. Inland from Aitape and extending down the coast towards Wewak was a range called the Torricellis. Looking up I thought I bet that's where we will end up, eventually I was proved to be right. Prior to the 6th Division arriving the area around Aitape had been garrisoned by American troops who had carried out limited patrolling. From what we could find out only about 1 to 2 hours out and back.

Came the time to disembark and I was in the first group. We had our web equipment and weapons on and carried our packs. Looked over the side and couldn't believe what I could see. There was this puny looking landing craft bobbing up and down covering about 14 feet at a bob with the landing net hanging over the craft. We were assembled at one of the hatchways in the side of the ship below decks. Came my turn and threw my pack down. Was told to jump when the craft rose which still meant about an 8 foot drop. They (that is the crew in the landing craft) and I jumped and landed with a thud, and was caught by a couple of blokes. Thank god that was over. Had visions of falling between the craft and the ship. When loaded we made for shore. On the way in we noticed Ducks or combined trucks and amphibious vehicles being driven out to sea and laden with a jeep. The driver left the vehicle being picked up by a boat and the vehicle slowly sank. Found out that under lend lease, which was an agreement between the U.S and Australian Governments, these vehicles or any equipment couldn't be handed over to us. The Americans didn't want the equipment as there was no jetty for ships to pick the items up of the beach so therefore they were sunk. Did hear later that we did acquire some of the jeeps which were brand new.

Having landed we were told where regimental H.Q. was situated a couple of miles to the east on the shore. We set off along the road, no truck was sent for us. Had developed a beaut headache, saw a U.S., RAP so called in a asked for a couple of aspirin. A generous orderly gave me a whole bottle. We had a spell there and were talking to the soldiers. Happened to mention that my gaiters were a bit worn, having seen plenty of use last time up. Next thing brand new ones appeared and were handed out to us. We arrived at the H.Q. and reported into the orderly room, and shown where to bunk down for the night. We were to move out the next morning.

Aitape was a thriving military town of tents, and permanent buildings. There was a superb beach and a magnificent surf. There was an airstrip behind the town and between the Americans and the Australians there was a large group of personnel. To the east was Wewak - in the hands of the Japanese. By the time I arrived their patrols had advanced far beyond the American patrol area. Our unit was in the

Toricellis at a place called Tong, and our role was to probe forward and establish the Japanese positions so that the infantry battalions could be sent in to attack. It was a cause of dissent at times with the infantry that we stirred up the hornets nests and they had to come in and clean up. However our role was to patrol and map and raid if the odds were on our side. As in our previous period in New Guinea, local maps were at a premium and it was part of our job while on patrol to map tracks, and pass these on to the Squadron Intelligence section. These were passed to headquarters. There were some aerial photograph maps available but these didn't show details of the tracks. Nine and ten squadrons had been sent out along the coast and were working with the other brigades.

The day after arriving we set out for Tong guided by one of the Squadron who had come back from the forward area. The first part was over fairly flat country to the foothills and then we started to climb. It wasn't too bad - not like the Black Cat Track near Wau. Kept climbing up the mountains and spent the night on the track. Next day arrived at Tong - a village on flat ground with a sugar loaf knoll to one side. There were some permanent buildings and of course the two man tents which we now carried. The camp had been attacked the week before and we had lost two - Ken Goodliffe and the hygiene sergeant, both had joined us as reinforcements. The Japanese had attacked suddenly and then withdrawn. Patrols were going out daily and we had a standing patrol on top of the knoll. There was a good view of the surrounding countryside from it. Soon settled back with the section - good to see the old mates again as I had been separated from them for over two months.

We spent some time on the knoll. There were no more attacks but contacts were frequent on patrols. I took a patrol out one day to a village about 6 hours walk away. Danny O'Dea and Spud Murphy were with me. We mapped the track on the way out. Arrived at the village, the luluai took us to a cleared area below the last huts and showed us a group of huts in a village about a mile away with Japanese in occupation and we were able to observe them through the telescope. We estimated there was about a dozen of them and they seemed to be in fairly good condition. We had been led to believe that most of them were not in good condition as supplies for them were coming in by submarine to Wewak, however apparently they were living off the land as they had planted market gardens and were growing vegetables. We could see gardens near the village, although this was normal as the Mary's from the local tribe would grow sweet potato, sugar cane, corn etc. in their gardens. We spent the night in the patrol officer's hut. That night I caused a grand disturbance in the early hours of the morning. Had a dream that the Japanese were attacking and was yelling out in my sleep. Woke to find Spud Murphy sitting on me and Danny O'Dea standing guard at the door. They reckoned their nerves weren't too good after that. We fell asleep again and at first light had breakfast and went down the hill and observed the village below until just before midday. We set out for Tong and made good time, reported in just before dark. This was typical of the type of patrols in this area. These reports of course were sent back to Regimental Headquarters and thence to Divisional and Brigade Intelligence Sections.

Diet was back to bully beef and biscuits as supplies had to be hauled up from Aitape by kai line. We had tried out the Owen guns by this. They were lighter than the Thompson but the 9mm ammunition proved effective - we could carry more magazines. Soon after Christmas we moved forward to a village named Wallum. This was situated on a large river named the Dammapp which flowed through to the sea. The brigades below us near the coast had now passed the Dammapp and were running into resistance.

We set up camp and at the same time had protective patrols out. These patrols soon located groups of Japanese in various directions, some within quarter to half an hours walk from the base. Our two man tents were set about the ground on stumps and with doubled over blankets suspended on poles. Our

new M.O. (Nickname 'Aspro') insisted we have our mosquito nets suspended over the beds. Dangerous when we were liable to be attacked at night. We slept with our weapons beside us and pointed out. One night soon after we arrived there, I felt a hand fiddling with my feet. Up came the Owen gun, safety catch off, and first pressure on the trigger when I saw a slouch hat outlined against the moon. It was Aspro checking our mosquito nets. Called him for all the names I could think of - he never did it again. another of his efforts was to make us chew the Atebrin (daily) in front of him. A lousy taste. Despite this view of him, he was an excellent surgeon. He patched up a skull from which a piece of the bone had been removed by a bullet. The bone was replaced in an operation in a tent with poor lighting. The next day penicillin was dropped to us, flown in by light plane. This was the first time that we had had penicillin, sulphur drugs were the norm before this. the penicillin had to be kept cool so it was immersed in the edge of the river at the first opportunity. The patient was carried out to Aitape and returned to Sydney. The poor soul died from a bout of malaria, we heard later. The days passed with patrols making frequent contact with Japanese. The Japanese suffered a few casualties. Lofty Roenfeldt lost a leg out at a place called House Copper. He was hit by a machine gun burst. We (Intelligent Section) had a funny patrol one day. We arrived at a clear flat area and were standing looking around. There was a wooded area in front of us and to the right with a dell also to the right. Next thing, looking as though he didn't have a care in the world came a Japanese. He walked straight towards us and was dispatched by one of the section. We moved over to the dell edge and sure enough, there were Japanese down there - they opened fire. I tossed a grenade over the side and it caught in a bush - yelled to everybody to duck. They were like greased lightning. We came back to the edge and started firing again. Next thing Shorty Campbell was hit in the inside of the right leg. I grabbed hold of him as he fell back and helped him onto his feet and away from the edge. Afterwards I worked out that, had the bullet missed his leg, it would have hit me in the chest. Monty told us to withdraw and detailed Ted Light and I to recce down the track leading down to the dell. We pushed down the track, heard a number of voices between the huts, decided to withdraw as the better part of valour.

It was at this time that we found plenty of evidence that the Japanese were eating parts of their dead. Flesh from the legs and livers were missing, and we saw dixies with lumps of meat in them - one day it was still simmering on the fire.

By this time it was about February and in December I received the news that I was to be a father in June. Didn't have any cigars or grog to celebrate. Anyway back to February, about this time I came down with a dose of Dergue Fever as a change from malaria. I think I was the only one in the unit to get it - that one mosquito picked on me. Talk about the pain of malaria - this was ten times as bad - felt as though my bones and joints were going to burst asunder. Head was throbbing and after 24 hours I looked like a boiled lobster from the rash. Went along to the R.A.P. and the Doc informed me I had dengue fever and there was no treatment except for aspirin which was duly administered. However I was privileged, they found a tin of orange juice. It was like the nectar of the Gods. Recovered after about 6 days of lying on the cot shaking with rigors. Give me malaria any day.

March had arrived by this and we were a bunch of wrecks with malaria attacks. The food down to bully beef and biscuits. We were getting supply drops but not enough. At one stage we were down to 10 rounds of ammunition each (303) and a couple of grenades. We heard that there were strikes of the wharfies in Townsville. On one of the supply drops Bluey Cavanagh was hit by a tin of biscuits. When I say a tin, they were cubed in shape and about the size of a packing case. the tin was soldered into one piece. Packed quite a wallop when it hit him on the head.

About this time, as I remember, Monty was detailed to pick 8 of us from 1 Section to carry a man back to the coast. (I think it was one of the R.A.P. corporals) The usual rough stretcher of a blanket and poles was rigged up. Ted Light was leading us. It was a two day walk to the coast following the Dammap. It was 4 carrying and 4 on guard. The area to the coast was supposed to be cleared of Japanese, but we still didn't trust this information. 10 Squadron was in position on the way. We had heard the day before that about 40 had been wiped out by Vickers Guns from the Machine Gun Company operating near 10 Squadron. All went well until reached a creek bed almost dry, and we spotted a group of 10 Japanese carrying a stretcher. They hadn't seen us so we quickly crossed and went to ground in some low scrub. We couldn't believe our eyes when we saw the group, who appeared to be O.R's, prop the man on the stretcher against a tree and then sit down on the track they had been moving along. We opened fire on them and the man propped against the tree was riddled. He was covered with a ground sheet including his face. We could see other lying on the ground. I threw a grenade and it failed to go off - my marvellous touch with grenades.

We ceased fire for a little while and then I yelled out to Ted that Jimmy May and I were going to circle to the left and come in on the other side. We moved out and cut the track and there they were lying on their faces. Jimmy and I opened fire and in the meantime the others had covered us. We approached the group. They were all dead but one - Jimmy dispatched him. We examined the body under the groundsheet and found he was an officer and had been dead before we shot him - he had plenty of lead in him.

We went back for our stretcher. the corporal wasn't very happy but we calmed him down. We reached the 10 Squadron base in the dark. It was lit up like a small village. We had been in the dark in our area. Made a few remarks about Japanese wandering around in cleared areas, went over their heads. Next morning we made our way to the coast and sent our stretcher case on his way to hospital. think he was glad to be rid of us - it had been a rough trip for him. We then settled down at a staging camp to wait for the rest of the squadron and take a well earned rest.

They arrived within days of our arrival at the coast. I was detailed to mind a tent full of our gear, and wait for a truck to be sent from Aitape. Five days went by and was sick of waiting so decided to get through by radio to Aitape. After about two hours managed to make it. Informed no truck available - be patient. Over the previous three days I had become nauseous and the legs weren't working too well. Decided to try and get one of the trucks passing through and going back to Aitape. On the 2nd day managed to con a driver and we loaded the gear onto the truck and set out, eventually arriving back with the squadron after a whole week. Wasn't exactly happy. Reported to Dr. Oakley and he informed me I was suffering from male pregnancy anxiety and prescribed aspirin. Didn't believe it but had to accept the diagnosis - the episode passed after a few days.

We settled down to a partially indolent life - there were always camp duties. However we were treated to occasional hot showers. there was a shower unit nearby. Ingenious device, all capable of being carried on a truck. There was a boiler and tank of water and this was pumped over to two shower heads mounted on a low platform. As I remember they even supplied soap - we didn't have any. There was also surfing - magnificent surf - only catch being there was a bit of an undertow so every now and then there was a dumper. Quite an experience hitting the sand floor under the wave. We had a couple of top surfers in the unit so had some expert tuition. We had other diversion - playing cards and chess. Card playing, bridge and poker, were the favourites. Had always been a favourite pastime in the unit. We had the high fliers betting Five Pound a game and we poorer souls betting in pennies. There was another way

to loose one's money and that was at the big 2 Up Game at the R.A.A.F. quarters near the airstrip. This was a deluxe game housed indoors with a ring and seats tiered around the ring. It was very well run and big money changed hands. The game was on every night. Not having a lot of money I didn't frequent it much.

The airstrip was at the back of the town and was manned by R.A.A.F. equipped with Beaufort bombers and these carried out support bombing raids as the division advanced towards Wewak. Talking about the R.A.A.F. we were visiting one of our men who had been taken ill. Three of us went down to the hospital in the squadron jeep. It had a broken windscreen. Outside the hospital we saw a nice new jeep with the R.A.A.F. Station Commander's flag mounted. The jeep had a nice new windscreen on it. After visiting our friend we came out of the building and the temptation was too great. After all, an R.A.A.F. Commander could easily get a new windscreen. We knocked off the jeep and drove it up the track to an empty bush area and switched windscreens. Heard the next day that there was a stink going on over the missing screen. The M.P's were on the job. We only 'borrowed' it as the saying goes. A couple of years ago a dental friend and I were talking and I found out that his elder brother was the C.O. at Aitape - it was his jeep we had 'borrowed' - crimes come home to roost. The R.A.A.F. also supplied the jungle juice. It was made from the alcohol used in some of the instruments. Some of the grog was red and some blue depending on the colour of the alcohol used. While we were resting beer was sent to the division from Australia. The first issue ever on active service. We were told it was 6 bottles per man. When the crates were opened most of it was missing and the crates were full of gravel. The A.A.S.C. managed to get two bottles each to us. The wharfies in Townsville where the ships had been loaded weren't too popular. Managed to get drunk however. Monty shared one of his bottles of scotch with us which had a marked effect after no grog for months and little food.

We witnessed a tragedy one day. A flight of Beauforts were taking off on a raid and they swung out over the water. Two of them were flying wing tip to wing tip. They must have touched because next thing they both disintegrated and plunged into the sea.

Our rest came to an end. By this time we were getting sick of this so called mopping-up action and felt cheated as the real war had moved to the Philippines and Borneo areas. 7th and 9th Divisions had been sent there. However we were stuck with New Guinea so might as well continue on with the job - didn't have much option.

Next we heard that the 9th and 10 squadrons were to do a landing on the other side of Wewak. It was to be the only time that a landing was an all Australian affair including the Navy and the Airforce. We were to go to a place called Wallum where we had been before the rest. At this time I was told that I was being moved to the Intelligence Section and for the rest of the war I spent my time keeping track of various elements of the squadron who were scattered over a wide area. We arrived at the staging camp near the Dammapp river and spent the night in a kunai field. Woke in the middle of the night with my mosquito net being bombarded. Rolled over and it was rats attacking us. Just as well we had the nets up. The mossies in this area were as big as horseflies. Next morning we moved out and started climbing. Climbing out of a creek bed I fell back about 20 feet flat on my back. Gave the spine a shaking. We eventually reached a camp area where we were to spend the night not far from Wallum. We were to have an airdrop the next day. It duly arrived in the morning and we spent the afternoon carting the drop up to the camp and then testing the .303 ammunition in the Bren Gun barrels. We shifted to Wallum the next day. One section went out to House Copper - first time I had been separated from them. Next thing we heard they were attacked and Dick Love had been wounded in the arm. One day I had to go out with a message for

Monty and on the way back at the last creek before the Dammap I was caught in a flash flood crossing the creek. Just made it back to shore. The water was travelling at about 14mph. Spent the night in a Japanese lean-to on the bank, eaten alive by mosquitos and it was cold. Next morning crossed the creek, now quiet. When I arrived at the Dammap it was running a banker. It was first light about 6am. Fired a revolver shot to attract attention and had some signal wire thrown to me and pulled myself across.

After this time we moved back to the coast at a place called Boiken not far from Cape Wom and I was mostly at Squadron Headquarters. Was occupied also with plenty of walkabouts to various sections. One time 1 Section had been sent up to the landing area on the other side of Wewak. What a lousy god-forsaken place - it was a swamp. I travelled up by landing barge and spent the night there. Went to the pictures. We were sitting there waiting for the picture to start when night arrived. Red Robbie was now the 6 Div. General - General Stevens had gone back to Australia. He arrived at the pictures and started to carry on like a two-bob-watch because we didn't stand to attention. He cancelled the pictures. There was a certain amount of booing. Walked over to the 155 Battery and watched them shelling the mountain at the back of Wewak which the Japanese still occupied. they were carrying out continuous 24 hour shelling. Certainly impressive watching the big guns. Went on to the landing area the next day by barge. Spent a week there and did a couple of patrols. We did some swimming each day, dicey because there was a Japanese gun inland which used to lob a shell into the sea every now and again. Didn't stop us swimming.

At about this time, flame throwers were introduced to the squadron and training commenced for a couple of teams. I saw the training one day - an awe inspiring weapon. They were to be used during an attack on the Souris villages behind Wewak. The Japanese had dug a series of bunkers and also had a hospital complex underground in this area. It was handy being in the Intelligent Section - privy to more information. One Section was in the attack on Souris. Meantime I was at Boiken and did a bit of wandering visiting the outposts. Other than that, plenty of swimming - a good protected beach there. the island offshore inhabited by the Japanese broke up the surf pattern. We had a variation in diet also - a grenade or two into the water gave us plenty of fish. There was only one catch - the water with infested at times by Portuguese Man O'War Jellyfish. Gave a nasty sting - had one on the leg one day. Another day had a funny experience. I swam out to sea about a mile towards the islands. Must have been suffering delusions and thought I could reach the island I was heading for. Next thing I saw a dark shape slicing through the water about 100 feet from me. The mind flashed "Shark" - turned and headed for shore until I blew out. Turned to face it to find it was a large turtle following me. As I first sighted it three of our blokes who had acquired a lakatoi passed nearby. I yelled and they thought I was just waving. Said a few words. They had some excitement another day - they landed on one of the smaller islands and were confronted by Japanese who wanted to surrender - a shock to their system.

Soon it was August and we had a tragedy occur at the base. A young man who had just joined us a week before had an accident with his Owen Gun when he came off perimeter guard. He didn't put his safety catch on, banged the butt down on the ground and activated the bolt. He was hit under the chin severing the artery and penetrating through to the brain. I heard the shot and rushed out. He was lying on the ground and there was not much we could do for him. It had a marked effect on me - lost his life for nothing - particularly as the war was over as we were to find out a week later. It was a sad group that wrapped him in a blanket, dug the grave and buried him all within 90 minutes.

However the war was not over as two days before the cease fire I was awakened in the early hours by an explosion. Shot out to the slit trench and the Japanese apparently had been wandering around the perimeter. Came the great day, was in the Sig. tent when the message came through. Being in the Intelligence Section I received the message. I wrote out another, and kept the original for myself. Now in the archives. We then began to wonder why the war had finished so quickly. There were all sorts of rumours. Things were made partially clear when we received our copies of the Guinea Gold - the Army weekly newspaper. It was a super bomb that had been dropped on a place named Hiroshima in Japan. Having been out of circulation for things mental for three years, the thoughts were on survival. We couldn't come to terms with an object called an atom bomb. It was all a mystery to us. We didn't relax our vigilance as the problem was as to whether the Japanese had also received the message.

So here ended the war that we had known for the last five years. Thoughts began to turn towards home. In June I had become a father to a baby girl Jennifer - received a telegram per radio. She was to be five months old before I saw her.

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Well here we are, a week after the cease fire and still slightly puzzled about the type of bomb used to end the war. It was beyond my ken as my last chemistry and physics lectures didn't go as far as splitting the atom. At the time we didn't realise the furore that the 'bomb' would create in years to come - but at the time we couldn't have cared less as during the last few months of the war we reckoned our luck was running out.

We were informed that a points system would be instituted for repatriation home. Middle East veterans with over 5 years serviced gained the most points - also men with needed qualifications such as carpenters for house building and allied technical people. Married people with various years of service were next. All this was to involve an immense amount of planning as men from England and Borneo and India had to be moved and ships had to be found so it looked as though it would be a long wait. We also realised that the P.O.W's would have preference.

Our unit area had been designated a reception area for the surrendering of Japanese and we started to receive them about a week or so after the cease fire. As they arrived in they were disarmed and searched and then taken to the processing centre and eventually shipped down the coast to a holding centre. This only lasted a week as complaints were made that we were being too hostile to the P.O.W.'s and the unit was relieved of this duty. Memories were long at the time. We then settled down to enjoy life with plenty of sunbathing and fishing in between the essential duties (cookhouse and latrine).

About the middle of September we were told that some of us would be going to the airstrip at Cape Wom and I was one of these lucky ones selected. We spruced up our tattered greens and polished the boots as best we could. The slouch hat was the hardest - sweat stained and grubby but we ended up not looking too bad. We were taken to the strip by barge and lined up on one side in divisional order. We, being part of the divisional headquarters, were almost opposite the table set up for the signing of the surrender. The time came for the ceremony and we saw General Adachi and his aides in the distance together with an escort of Australians. They were made to march the full length of the division and up to the table. On the other side of the table were General Robertson and divisional officers. Here was this frail looking old man in well worn uniform in his moment of shame. For a moment I felt a twinge of pity for him

and then remembered what had happened over the past few years. The signing took place and the Japanese were marched off down the strip again. Now the war was truly over for us.

The unit was shifted to Karawop and the regiment - what was left of it - was united once more. Schools were set up in various trades together with English and mathematics. Teachers were called from among the troops and the teaching was under the control of the Education Corps. Managed to dodge this as I still had some Intelligence duties. We had medical examinations (probably to keep the doctors busy) and I showed a positive blood sugar test. I was sent to the C.C.S. at Wewak and cleared by another test. Nice little rest in hospital for a couple of days. We received regular editions of the army newspaper and, of course, started to get mail regularly.

The one thought in our minds was "home" and I was anxious to see my daughter in the flesh. By this time she was 4 months old. Ships came and went and each one that came in we hoped we would be on. At the end of November news came in via the radio that HMAS Shropshire with a destroyer escort, would be putting into Wewak on the way home from Tokyo Bay. The skipper had radioed that he could take about 1000 and that the destroyer could take about 100. I was one of the lucky ones selected.

Previous to this news we were directed to clean ourselves again (spit and polish) and rifles and bayonets were dragged out. Automatic weapons and all ammunition had been handed in before this. The object of the clean up was to be a visit and revue of the 6th Division by Tom Blamey. We were aroused early on the morning and as I remember we reached the airstrip by about 7.30am. The division was lined up in a straight line along the strip. He was supposed to land at 10.00 hours and then revue the troops. Ten o'clock came and no sign of him. Men were dropping like flies in the heat and carted off. The D.C.3 appeared about 11.00 hours and flew along the length of the airstrip at low level. There was a lot of muttering by the troops about bloody Generals by this time - the feeling was he wasn't popular. The plane landed and the 'great man' transferred to a jeep. Was driven the length of the division and that is all we saw of him. Hope he enjoyed his dinner at the mess.

Back to the big day and we were awake early, and there was that beautiful cruiser lying off-shore to take us home. We were then informed that the destroyer had gone on to Madang to pick up Navy personnel and that the 100 selected for the destroyer wouldn't be going. We were kept in suspense through the morning til a message was sent from the ship that the captain would take all those selected - what joy. We were loaded into barges and ferried out to the ship. I went out about midday. As we pulled into the gangway there was a yell from the deck - "Orch" - I looked up and there was a face I had been at school with and also at university. He was the dentist on board. We arrived on deck and I received a welcome from Gavin and told that I would be sleeping in his cabin in the officers quarters. He took me down there and settled me in. However there was one catch as I had to pass through the guard and between the officers quarters and the rest of the ship, and as these kept changing there was an argument each time I passed through to go to the men's mess. Enjoyed two nights of the officers quarters and then informed Gavin and thanked him for the kind thought but thought it would be better if I slept in the O.R's quarters. There wasn't much left by this time so spent the rest of the trip on top of the dynamo - the hum put me to sleep.

Returning to the first day - we found out that besides the crew of about 850 on board, there were over 1000 Navy personnel plus the 1000 plus Army. As could be imagined, the ship was a little crowded. After settling in, we were given a talk by the captain and the mess rules were given to us, and hoped we would enjoy the voyage. We were given the run of the ship bar the officer quarters, the bridge, and the

engine room and gunnery rooms. Mess was in two sections for the visitors, and there was a fair degree of congestion. Also the canteen was open to us. It was announced that lunch would be served and I was in the second sitting. The cooks were superb as they had turned on a roast dinner (pork) and dessert. What a feast, the like of which we hadn't seen for a year. All the meals were as good.

Before the meal was served we got under way and started to steam down the coast past Madang and Finschhafen and Lae. On the second morning the captain came on the intercom and announced that he was going to speed up to battle speed and we increased to 28 knots - just below full speed. Well a thrilling feeling as we cut through the waves - no roll by just forging ahead. The ship was pulsating and the roar of the engines and the noises of the blowers in the ventilators was exciting. It gave one the feeling of going into action. During the trip was shown the dental surgery and the ship's hospital and spent quite a lot of time on the deck during the day just admiring the scenery on the distant shore until we rounded the corner from the China Straits and headed for Sydney. We had long talks with the crew members not on duty and they showed us their lockers. They had been in Tokyo Bay at the time of the surrender and made a few sorties ashore. The lockers were crammed with engineering tools, bolts of silk, in fact anything that wasn't bolted down. Can't have been much left in the factories. On deck was a jeep lashed down which had been 'acquired' from the Americans.

During the time on deck I had time to reminisce over the last 5 years and the changes in my life. From a student to the dental corps then the luck of getting into the 2/7th and having experiences that I wouldn't have missed despite the fact there were times I wished I was home tucked up in my own bed. The good friends made and the sad thoughts of mates lost. The various roles we played - at Skindiwi - acting as a barrier on the main track to Wau and making our presence felt by active patrolling and ambushes. then to the highlands at Bena Bena and mostly operating in three man patrols and O.P's to make ourselves look a bigger force than we were. Then the Ramu valley and learning to work with a division - more in an infantry role. Then to Aitape where we acted in a reconnaissance role working ahead of the battalion to make contact with the enemy. Now it was back to civilian life and learning to clean up our language and reduce the number of expletives.

So time passed on board with good meals provided by the navy and even being able to use the phones and toilets, a change from squatting or sitting on a pole. One night the captain came on the intercom and informed us that we would be off Sydney Heads at about 6am and that we were to dress ship as we proceeded down the harbour. Not much sleep that night with excitement and getting the gear packed ready for the next morning. The wake up call came before dawn and after breakfast as the heads hove in sight we were paraded on deck, both sailors and soldiers lined the sides of the ship. I was fortunate to be up near the bow. As we passed through the heads and proceeded down the harbour all hell broke loose. The ferries taking the people to work, and the ships anchored in the harbour blew their foghorns. The time being about 0700 hours and despite the fact that it was December, we were all freezing. The problem was that we only had shirts and trousers and only one set of these.

Eventually we neared Garden Island and passed the battleship K.G.5 and then pulled into our berth. About an hour later we started to disembark and were greeted by custom officers. The war was over and back to normal. Questioned as we stepped ashore - "Anything to declare" - an emphatic "No" in reply. We were then taken to on L.T.D. and I managed to scrounge a pullover from the "Q" Store and felt a little warmer. Then we were informed that we would be on a troop train to Melbourne that night so we spent the rest of the time in Sydney. It had been a little over a year since we left Australia. That night the usual routine - into the sleeping cars to Albury, then change trains and then to Melbourne.

Good to see the old town again and people going to work - just as though there had never been a war. Caught the tram and arrived in South Caulfield. Hadn't rung my wife so she didn't know I was coming home or even back in Australia. She got the shock of her life when she opened the door. Hugs and a few tears and then saw our baby for the first time - beautiful - she was 5 months old. I think it was a Wednesday, and had been told to report to Royal Park for discharge on the 12th December which I remember correctly was a Monday, so had a few days to settle in and more importantly, an extra 5 days pay. We had been issued with some food coupons at Spencer Street to carry us over till discharge.

Sat down to a proper dinner that night at a proper table and enjoyed it thoroughly. However as I said before, couldn't eat much after living on lean meals for so long. Had my first introduction to bottle feeding and changing nappies and then bliss - into bed between sheets and with a pillow - luxury. Then during the night it was like guard duty - up tending the baby. Reality had arrived and what it meant to be a father. It was a small price to pay for being home.

The 12th arrived and reported to Royal Park, the discharge depot. Handed in the Web equipment and then paraded for the medical exam. The usual things happened - bend over, cough etc - fortunately mentioned intermittent pains in the appendicle area which at a later time was accepted as a war-caused injury. Then had to report to the psychologist as I was returning to University. Put through the usual bull - question and answer papers and look at the shape problems. After five years of only using the brain to stay alive I found I was a little musty on the mathematical problems. Then fronted the psychologist, and was informed that he didn't think I would pass the course. He was a young buck just got his degree, I would say. Informed him that I was admitted in any case so his test didn't count for much. Then to the clothing store where we were issued with a suit and hat - we had the right of refusal if we didn't want them. Army clothing we were allowed to keep. We didn't have much as the winter uniforms and greatcoats etc. were in our kit bags in store. We were assured that they would be delivered to us later. Next I received pay owing and a book of ration coupons covering meat, butter and petrol and coupons for household items such as sheets and blankets.

Proceeded home as a civilian - the date was the 12th December and short of 5 years by a couple of months. Proceeded to enjoy a life of leisure getting to know Jenny - a little hard as she thought Grandpa was Dad, and I was a stranger - a few crying sessions for the first weeks. After the first week it sank in that there was no money coming in any more and that I couldn't use father-in-law's money. We were living with him as his wife was dead. Looked in the paper and saw a job offered at an ice works near the Caulfield racecourse. It was owned by Sennitt's Ice Cream and also contained a freezer storage area. The job was to work all night making the hundredweight blocks of ice that were delivered by the ice merchants to households for the ice boxes. The job was to make the blocks, and when made, to store them in a freeze chamber. This entailed stacking them four high and I made a hundred plus every night. The heartbreak was the ice men started to arrive at 5am so had to gradually demolish the stack again. Anyway the money was good at 10pound a week and kept us going until started at the Dental School in March. In February I was shifted into the South Melbourne Ice Cream factory cutting ice cream slices, and worked there until the finish. Was offered a job with Sennitts, thought about it as it entailed being a foreman, but in a short time (like about 5 minutes) decided to finish the dental course.

Started at the University, as I said, in March and then we started to receive a weekly wage, if I remember it was Five pound Six shillings and some odd pence. It was a lifeline and together with what we had saved from the wages from the job, and our deferred pay - One hundred pounds some weeks after discharge, and then another One hundred pounds two years later. Education fees were paid and there was a book allowance. This meant heavy reliance on libraries as I couldn't afford all the books. Further expenses were dental equipment used in the Prosthetic Laboratory and the surgery. These were purchased as we proceeded through the course and had need of them. I bought my microscope out of our own money. It was a generous subsidy by the government. We continued to live with my father-in-law and was a life saver during the five years of the course.

Soon slipped back onto university life, although not as free as pre-war as I had the responsibility of a family. There were 63 in our 1946 year of whom 10 we ex-school children and the rest ex-servicemen. Of these most were ex-airforce. All of us who had joined up in 1940-41 returned - some in 1945 and some in 1946 - except one who was killed over Europe when his plane was shot down. All Rehab. students were under the control of a Brigadier with his office situated at the University. If one missed too many roll calls at lectures or reports weren't satisfactory, a letter arrived to front up to him. Not quite as bad as the army.

Thus 1946 passed and exams approached, a nerve tingling time and long hours waiting. I had repeated the first year so I was familiar with the subjects. Came the Chemistry practical exam and felt a little poorly. The next day I went down with what was to be my last attack of malaria - a beauty. Got the local medical officer and was put on the recommended treatment - 15 Atebrin at a dose. Much vomiting so had to push more down. Anyway it seemed to fix the disease - no more attacks - went yellow again. I failed the practical exam and had to repeat it - successful the next time. So onto second year. Time passed and 1949 came with a new daughter with an increase in pay to Five pound 16 shillings. The next year was the final or 5th year and in July the final exams were sat for. A fortnight waiting and then the results - I had passed. It was all worth it and could now get a job. The first at Seventeen pounds a week. We had kept ourselves going during the Christmas vacation by me working in various jobs - two years at Nappie Wash was one job.

We had to repay the costs of the equipment which we had bought. Managed to pay it off in two years, and arranged a loan from Repat. to buy my first car. In 1951 I opened my first practice. Thus a decade after I had joined up I was at last keeping my family at the age of 32 years. Already the war was disappearing into the distance, except on Anzac Day.

Here endeth the last chapter of my memories which have been written to be filed away and maybe of use if a trained historian writes a book about the squadron and our adventures during the 2nd World War. There are bound to be mistakes as memory is fading and I did the writing without reference to records or books.

(Signed) BOYD ORCHARD

My suggestions for a book that should be written about all the Squadrons and M & Z Forces.

Chapter 1 The story of the first Independent and Commando Squadrons in England and a full write up of the arguments for and against of the formation of the units here, and also the reasons for the selection of The Promontory as the training centre, and where the units were intended to be used when formed.

Following Chapters One for each Squadron (Coy) and M & Z Forces, also mention of the New Zealand Coys. which were trained at the Prom. Emphasis on each chapter should be made of the various roles each squadron passed through during their service. For instance I can identify four different roles that 7 Squadron passed through during its' service. In these chapters I don't feel it is necessary to describe individual patrols.

Further a memorial roll of the units should be included in the book.