

First In, Best Dressed

The short life and times of an Australian Citizen-Soldier



VX170 David “Ian” Arthur Green



Alistair Capp

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**The short life and times of an Australian
Citizen Soldier**

VX 170 Captain David “Ian” Arthur Green

(Second Edition)

Alistair G A Capp

Sources: All sources are noted and gratefully acknowledged in the bibliography. Sources are both traceable (ie Australian War Memorial) and untraceable (some web/internet). Where possible I have acknowledged them, however some sources are not known and in any event none have had consent sought other than family members. To those, I offer my thanks and apologies, I hope you understand.

This book and its contents are intended for the use of DIA 'Ian' Green's immediate family, the individuals and groups who have been the sources of its content and those who wish to remember those who served in the war of 1939-45. It is not intended for commercial use.

Thanks to Libby Thomson, Sue Hateley, Julie Thomson and Freddie Capp for their time and effort in collating and supplying what remains, and to Michael Daniel for proofing and advice.

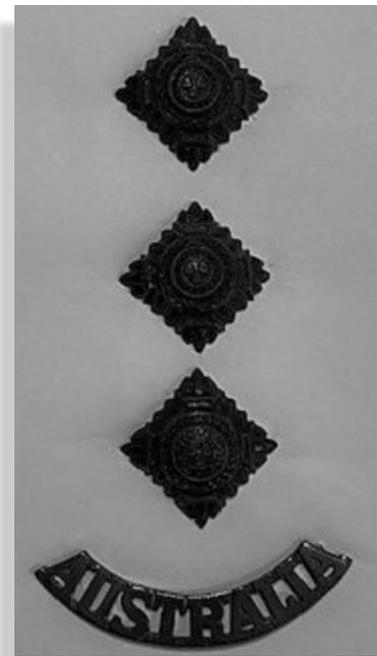
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Glossary



Glossary

18 Pdr	Standard British Field Artillery Piece of WW1 – Shell weight = 18 lbs
2-inch Mortar	Small calibre mortar for intimate fire support. Issued at Pl level
25 Pdr	Standard British Field Artillery Piece of WW2 – Shell weight = 25 lbs
2IC	Second In Command (at any level)
303	Australian Service Rifle – Short Magazine Lee Enfield 0.303” (SMLE III*)
A/Tk	Anti-Tank (obstacle or weapon)
Adjt	Adjutant. Effectively the Bn CO’s Staff Officer
AIF	Australian Imperial Force (First AIF – WW1, or Second AIF – WW2)
Armd	Armoured – Typically Tanks
Arty – Fd, Mdm, Hy	Artillery – Field, Medium, Heavy
Bangalore Torpedo	Effectively a long steel pipe filled with explosive. Inserted through a barbed wire obstacle. When detonated, it blows a gap through the wire.
Bde	Brigade – typically 3 X Bn (Commanded by Brigadier)
Bivouac	Sleeping in the field; not usually tactical
Bn	Battalion (Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel)
Boys	Boys Anti-Tank Rifle
Bren Gun	Standard British WW2 Light Machine Gun (LMG)
Bren Gun Carrier	A lightly armoured tracked vehicle
Brew	Warm or hot Tea (also known as Char). “Sometimes you need a brew in your guts to keep you going” 2 sugars standard (gets you back on your feet); milk if available.
Brig	Brigadier (Usually commands a Brigade)
C&SC	Command and Staff School
Capt	Captain (Usually commands an Infantry Company)
CMF	Citizen’s Military Forces (Post war ‘Militia’ – later known as the Army Reserve)
CO	Commanding Officer (Typically a Battalion – A LtCol)
Corps	Corps – typically 3 x Div (Commanded by General)
Coy	Company (3 X Pl) approx. 100 – 110 men. (Commanded by a Capt or Maj)
Cpl	Corporal – usually commands an Infantry Section
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission (Manage all war cemeteries to this day)
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal

Digger	There are many theories about origins; Originally defined an 1800's Australian (gold rush) miner. It is likely the term 'stuck' from the amount of trenches they dug during WW1. The term came into wide use in 1917 and remains in common use today.
Div	Division – typically 3 X Bde (Commanded by Major General)
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
ED	Efficiency Decoration. Awarded to Commissioned Officers of the Militia for 20 years service. Wartime counted for double.
Engr	Engineers
Gen	General
GOC	General Officer Commanding (Typically a Division)
GR (number)	Grid Reference (Map Reference Coordinates – usually 6 or 8 figures)
Grenade	Hand Grenade (also known as Mills Bomb)
HQ	Headquarters (Any Level)
I/C	In Command
Inf	Infantry
LCpl	Lance Corporal – usually 2IC of a Section
Lewis Gun	WW1 Light Machine Gun – obsolete in WW2
LMG	Light Machine Gun (Bren Gun/Lewis Gun)
Lt/Lieut	Lieutenant (Usually commands an Infantry Platoon)
LtCol	Lieutenant Colonel (Usually commands an Infantry Battalion)
LtGen	Lieutenant General (Usually commands a Corps)
Maj	Major (Usually a senior Infantry Company Commander or Battalion 2IC)
MajGen	Major General (Commands a Division)
Marching Order	Marching Order is typically all webbing and equipment, plus weapon and pack. Soldiers can usually move and fight for several days.
Matilda	'I' (Infantry) Tank designed for close support
MC	Military Cross
MEA	Middle Eastern Area
MG	Machine Gun (Any calibre)
MiD	Mentioned in Dispatches
MM	Military Medal
MMG	Medium Machine Gun (Usually a tripod mounted Vickers MG)
MP	Military Police
MUR	Melbourne University Regiment
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer – LCPL to WO1

NGS	Naval Gunfire Support (Ships firing on land targets)
OC	Officer Commanding (typically a Company)
Offr	(Commissioned) Officer – Lieutenant and above
'Old Man (The)'	Usually the Unit Commanding Officer.....or anyone who behaves like an old man
Ops	Operations (ie typically in contact with the enemy)
OR	Other Ranks – Generic term for persons other than commissioned officers
Padre	Every Battalion has a Padre/Chaplain. Chaplains administer spiritual or religious support and pastoral care to all members of the Army. They also advise Commanders on spiritual, religious and pastoral wellbeing, personal morality, ethics and morale. Colloquially known as 'God botherers' by diggers, a good Padre is invaluable.
PI	Platoon (3X Sect) approx. 30 - 35 men. Commanded by a Lieutenant
POW	Prisoner of War
Pit	(Also Fighting Pit or Bay) Small trench dug into the ground – usually holds 2 people.
PT	Physical Training
Pte	Private
RAF/RAAF	Royal Air Force/Royal Australian Air Force
RAP	Regimental Aid Post - a Bn's front-line medical establishment for immediate treatment and triage of battlefield casualties. Usually run by the Bn RMO
Regt	Regiment – equivalent to Brigade. Commanded by a Colonel or Brigadier
RMO	Regimental Medical Officer – the Unit Doctor
RN/RAN	Royal Navy/Royal Australian Navy
Runner	Early in WW2, most communication between Units and Sub Units required a runner. Runners would either carry a detailed message or simply remember and deliver it. This role is risky and requires initiative, trustworthiness and intelligence.
Sangar	Fighting Bay made of built up rocks and sand for protection from small arms fire, artillery and aerial bombing – usually constructed when unable to dig
Sect	Section: Infantry – 10 soldiers. (Commanded by Corporal)
Sgt	Sergeant (2IC of an Infantry Platoon)
Sig	Signaller (Private in Australian Corps of Signals)
SNCO	Senior Non-Commissioned Officers – Sgt and SSgt
Stand To	'Stand to Arms' – the sunrise and sunset hour – all man defences ready to fight

SWPA	South Western Pacific Area
TEWT	Tactical Exercise Without Troops – a map based tactical training activity. Much angst is saved through not actually using diggers.
Tk Tp	Troop of Tanks, Lt I/C 3 X Tks
Tk/Tks	Tank or Tanks
Tommy	English Soldiers (also known generically as Pommies by Australians)
VC	Victoria Cross
VD	Venereal Disease (A disease contracted and transmitted by sexual contact)
Wadi	Dry watercourse, can be deep enough to conceal soldiers.
Webbing	Belt and braces type harness to carry ammunition pouches, bayonet, water bottle, compass, pistol and entrenching tool.
WO	Warrant Officer.
WO1	Warrant Officer Class 1 / As Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), the senior WO of a Bn
WO2	Warrant Officer Class 2 / As Company Sergeant Major (CSM), the senior NCO of a Coy
WW1	World War 1 (1914-1918)
WW2	World War 2 (1939-1945)



To Ian's big sister Eleanor Webster (Green) 1903 – 1989

Nana, I finally worked out why you tapped my shoulder when you left the room – you had a job for me to do.

Your extended family to come will understand and be proud of Ian's life as a citizen-soldier; his sacrifice, and equally proud of the stoic, quiet manner that you, your parents and siblings bore your loss and went on to 'look after the living'.

Sleep peacefully; I hope this keeps you proud.

Thanks also to Ian – we will remember him.

The Author

Born in Melbourne, Alistair was raised and educated in Tasmania. Having spent much of his youth in the Tasmanian outdoors, he joined the Army Reserve in 1983, serving as an Artillery Gunner whilst completing a B Com at Uni of Tasmania. He was hooked. Commissioned into RAInf in 1987, Alistair served in regimental and instructional roles alongside his 'day jobs'.

He commanded four rifle companies in three States and completed Staff College (R) Military History module prior to being promoted Lieutenant Colonel and appointed Commanding Officer, Melbourne University Regiment. He finished up there in 2005 to spend time with his young family and learn how to fly fish.



Having worked in all Eastern States in retail property, he is an Investment Manager for an institutional property trust.

In 2013, some old comrades invited him to help them out and he has since acted as a tour guide and military historian for tours to France, Gallipoli and Singapore, still alongside his 'day job'.

Married to Jen, together they have raised Anthony, Robert and James. They live in Melbourne.

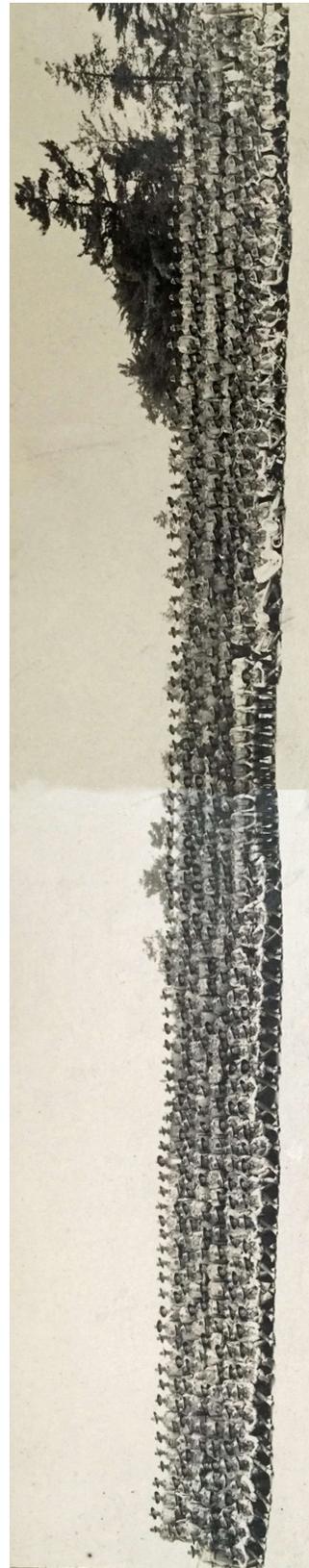
Winifred 'Freddie' Capp (nee Webster) is his mother, Eleanor Webster (nee Green) his Grandmother.

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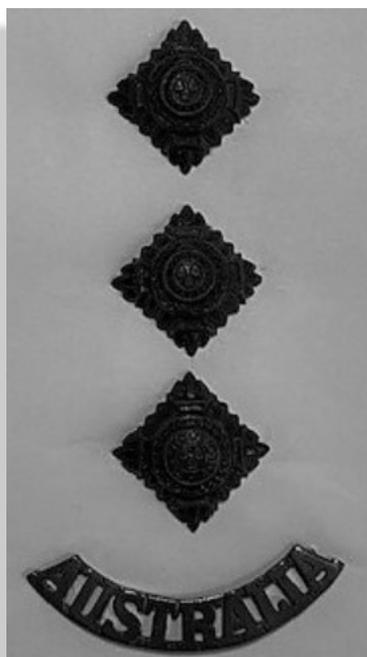
Bibliography



2/7th Battalion 1939 JT

1

Introduction



These are Ian's Captain 'stars' and titles AC

The Soldier By Rupert Brooke

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.*

*And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.*

A Citizen-Soldier for all his adult life and one of the very first Australians to answer the call of the bugle in WW2, **VX170 Captain DIA 'Ian' Green** fell in Australia's first major battle – The Battle of Bardia – on 3 Jan 1941 – 80 years ago; he was the first officer of 2/7th Battalion to be Killed in Action in WW2.

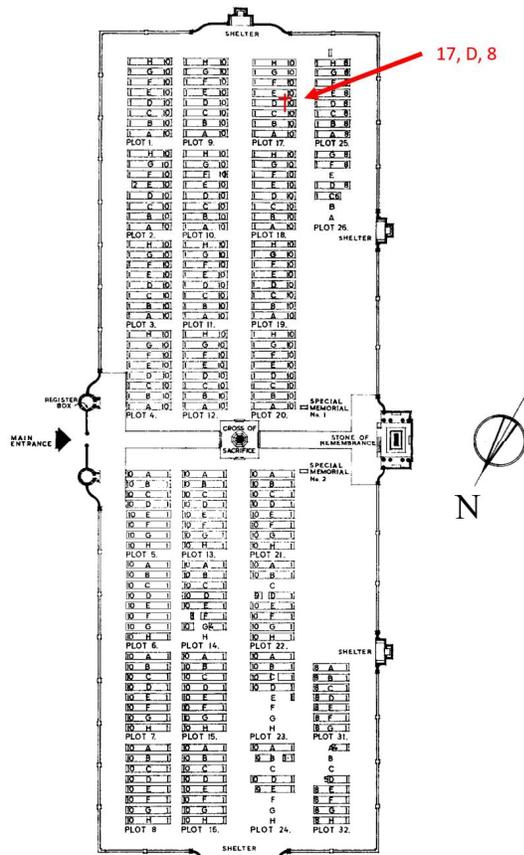


Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt. Ian lies in this quadrant. Halfaya Pass is in the background.

There are many corners of Egypt that have a *richer dust concealed* and remain forever Australia. Ian lies in Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, grave 17. D. 8 with 2,045 comrades from the Battle of Bardia and other battles fought nearby three generations ago. He lies in the company of warriors of all three services from the UK, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, India, Canada and Greece.

Overlooked by the strategic Egypt/Libyan border area comprising the Halfaya Pass, this place changed hands no less than six times during WW2. The Area is barren, arid and harsh. In Summer the heat can become unbearable; yet the night before Ian was killed had been freezing cold. It is not unlike inland parts of his native land – and therefore might not have seemed too strange to him.

These days, Brooke's *'The Soldier'* is anachronistic, but Ian would have learned it during his school days; it was familiar after WW1 and Australians then considered themselves, if not English, of English stock.



Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt

Ian was a child of his age and this written memorial tries to capture the mood of his times.

If you count Arthur Albert (1877-1966) and Catherine (1873-1954) Green of Morwell Victoria in your lineage, Ian was one of us; he is all of us. Share this with the family and tell his story. It is your story now.

During the darkest days of WW2, Ian's death was a profound tragedy for the Green Family. The youngest of 5 children, Ian was quietly mourned by his parents and siblings for the rest of their lives. His parents said little to the next generation; there were few observations passed down. He was grieved, but rarely mentioned by his siblings – despite many curious questions, in line with the times and family habit, little was said. To his Nieces and Nephews, memories of him are scant.

Ian's tragedy was but one of many, repeated in Australia some 40,000 times during WW2, across all three services. Only 25 years after the 62,000 Australian deaths of WW1, few families remained untouched. Keep them too in your perspective and your memories.

The Battle of Bardia was Australia's first land battle of WW2. Of all Australia's WW2 battles, this one was to answer the question 'Can they live up to the First AIF?'. This question, spoken and

unspoken many times over by participants, the Government and the population drove the tone and tempo of all training and preparation until the opening barrage just before dawn, 3 Jan 1941.

In order to understand Ian, we should look through his eyes, and his times; not ours three generations later as we look back. Australia was a very different nation then. There is a degree of poetic license within, however the intention is to paint Ian as plainly and honestly as he was found. I will not embellish his strengths or hide his human frailty – to do either is a disservice.

As the ranks of WW2 veterans thin, soon to disappear, we know that none of the WW2 soldiers who served with Ian remain.

Sadly, during my research I realised I had met several old soldiers who had met Ian. They too are all gone. Most prominent of these was Brigadier Sir Frederick Chilton, known for his roles at Tobruk, Greece/Crete and later at Milne Bay 1942. He was Acting Second in Command of 2/2nd Bn when Ian was attached to them for two months in Palestine in early 1940.

Described as "inspirational and genuine", Sir Fred died aged 103 in 2007. Former Sgt Carl Parrott said: "He was an excellent man. He wasn't highfalutin; he was just a good bloke. There are some Commanding Officers I wouldn't walk five miles for, but I'd go miles and miles for him".

I met Fred at a dinner in 1995, when, aged 91 he spoke for 25 minutes without notes at a 2/2 Bn reunion in Newcastle, with a clarity of thought and speech to humble most of us in C Coy 2/17 Bn RNSWR. The 'olds and bolds' of 2/2 Bn had asked the diggers of C Coy to join them for their annual dinner as they saw their numbers decline. We interspersed 18 with 80-year olds – worried they might not get on together, or even have anything in common. But they had much in common and enjoyed each other's company immensely. In several cases the old led the young astray.

To see how these ageing warriors still adored Sir Fred was the evening's highlight. If only I'd known, I would have asked Sir Fred about Ian – I'm sure he would have easily recalled.

Ian has been on my mind since I received his medals and badges of rank in the 1990's. These, along with his portrait and colour patch were framed and would hang in every office I occupied, keeping watch over me during my service in the Army Reserve. I discovered we share several units in common; 2/17 Bn RNSWR because of his 2 month attachment to 2/2 Bn; 5/6 Bn RVR because at the time of his death his B Coy 2/7 Bn was Under Command 2/5 Bn, and Melbourne University Regiment as Ian spent almost 4 years there as an OR, undertaking officer training.

Whilst guiding tours to WW1 battlefields, I was in the habit of taking one of Ian's rank 'stars' and one of his 'Australia' shoulder titles with me. In my pocket I felt for them as I presented or spoke – it helped calm me. On more than one occasion I let guests hold Ian's 'Australia' shoulder title while I described to them where, or how, their forebears met their fate so far from home – it helped calm them, giving them a tangible focus point. I remember a lady of 75 holding Ian's 'Australia' while I told her, as best as we could work out what happened to her father in Singapore in the early days of 1942. She had never met him, having found he was her father when she was 60 – and his body has never been identified.

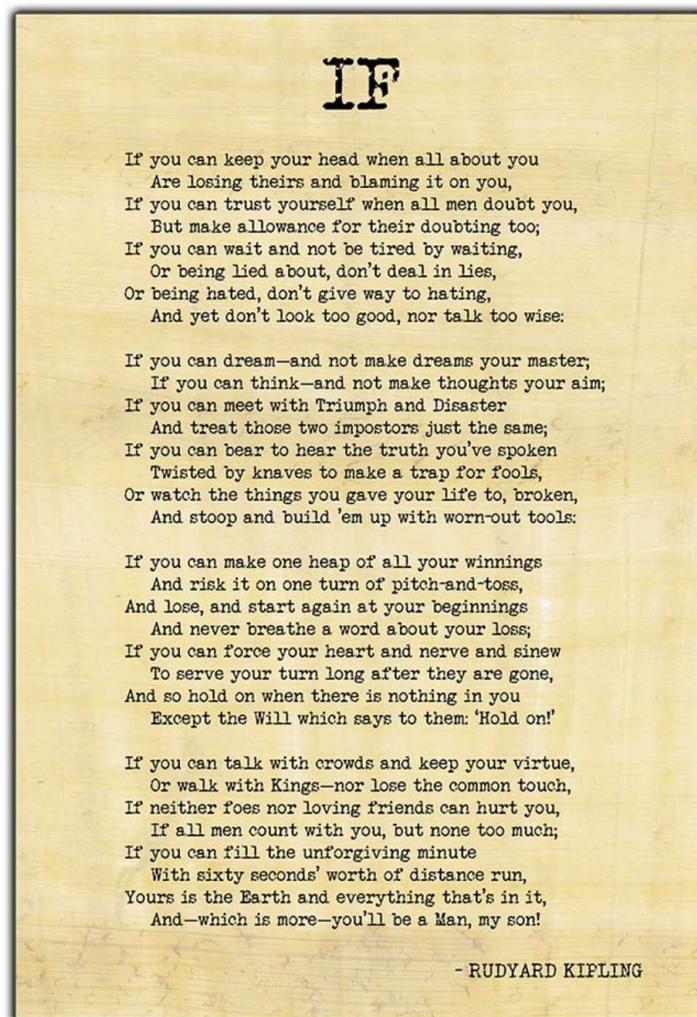
Within five months of Ian's death, most of the 2/7th Bn went 'in the bag', becoming Prisoners of War at the end of the Crete campaign. In Feb 1943, Sgt John 'Jack' Evans sent Arthur and Kit a postcard. A Morwell boy, son of the newsagent, John had been shot down by flak and captured (in the sea not far from Bardia) in Jul 1942 whilst an RAAF observer/air gunner in a Hudson

bomber. John related that many of the people in his POW camp were Australians from 2/7th Battalion; some had served under Ian's command in B Coy when he was killed.

To quote John: *"They spoke very highly of Ian, in fact they said he was the best officer they had"*. We should be careful of such writing – far fewer deaths in WW2 were 'instantaneous and without suffering' than letters would suggest – they usually sought to shield the grieving recipients. However, Jack's wording is remarkable as it goes further than a mere platitude. It stuck me that Ian was in fact very competent at his job and highly regarded by his superiors, peers and men. After further research my view is strengthened – he was a remarkable man of his remarkable generation.

Ian's story quickly became longer than intended. His story is entwined with Australia's between-the-wars-Militia; the raising, training and deployment of the 6th Division to the Middle East, as well as Ian's final Battle. I found without this context, his story is difficult to colour. So, enjoy ploughing through the context; I hope you find it worthwhile!

Born in the years prior to WW1, Ian's upbringing was as a child of the Empire. Few poets of the Empire are remembered as well as Kipling; his verses were taught in Victorian schools and the below is one of his better-known works:



I contend in this Biography that Ian filled the above criteria for success. Significantly, at the time of Ian's death he was performing a key role in a key part of the action that proved the second AIF worthy successors to the first AIF.

He had walked towards the fire and fulfilled his promise. Some of his peers had already found they could not.

3 January 2021 marked 80 years since the Battle of Bardia, and Ian's death.

It recently struck me that time is running out to capture Ian's story and as a result of my life experiences, this job should fall to me. The Covid lockdown of 2020 presented me with the opportunity to use my time, not least to keep myself sane, and get on with it. I have enjoyed this work immensely and it is my unconditional gift to you, Ian's extended family.

I have chosen to draw several passages from the book *'Not as a Duty Only – An Infantryman's War'* written by Sgt (Later Maj) Henry 'Jo' Gullett, who led a Platoon of 2/6th Battalion in the Battle of Bardia. If you wish to gauge the mood of the times, and understand something of 2nd AIF Sub Unit leadership in this battle, it is well worth reading – the below passage relates the night prior to the battle:

"When I returned to my bedding John Stewart came with me. He said, 'If I get killed tomorrow Jo, do something for me will you? My name is not Stewart.' He told me what it was. 'Write to my family. And write also to this woman. You'll know what to say.'

When he left I walked around the platoon talking to the men for a while.

It was a very cold night and I shivered in my clothes and two blankets. During the night a man from 18 Platoon came and lay down beside me. We were both cold so we shared our blankets and slept better.

I woke up very early. It was not necessary to wake the sections. While I was shaving I could hear the clink of their boots and arms against the stones as they rolled their bedding and buckled on their harness. They looked gigantic in their greatcoats and leather waistcoats."

This biography has been researched and constructed using all available sources; some written and direct, some word of mouth and some by reverse engineering circumstances. There would have been letters and other possessions; perhaps a diary, but they appear to be long gone. All possible recorded facts were included, then embellished only where required, using surrounding circumstances in order to draw reasonable conclusions. This is to give some depth and context to Ian's life and times. So long after the events it will never be fully accurate; I believe it's close.

I decided early on not to extensively footnote. *Almost* all my references are included in the Bibliography, the authors and owners of which I thank and apologise to profusely!

All and any inaccuracies and errors are of course my sole responsibility.

Remember Ian and his comrades, every Anzac Day.

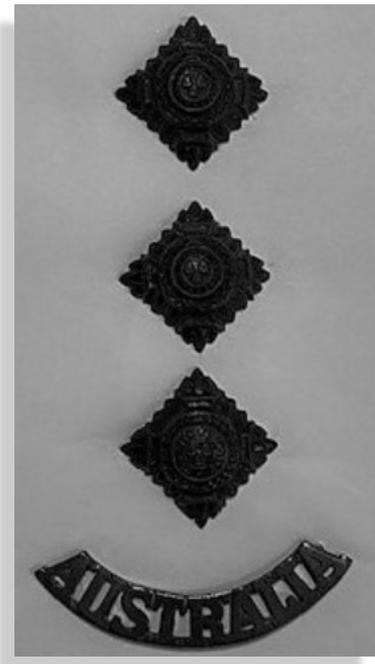
Lest We Forget.

Alistair Capp

3 January 2021

2

**For God, Country and
Learning**



For God, Country and Learning

Ian's story begins with Arthur Albert Green (Born Rosedale Vic 25 Apr 1877 – Died Morwell Hospital 9 Apr 1966) and Catherine 'Kit' Stamp (Born Talbot Vic 21 Apr 1872 – Died Morwell 12 Mar 1954) marrying on 30 Apr 1902 at Napier St Methodist Church Fitzroy.



Arthur and Kit Green's Wedding 1902 SH

Arthur's father – John Green (1835-1920) – migrated to Australia from Pen-y-cwm, Wales in 1857 at the height of the gold rush and established Green's Drapery Store. Draper is now something of a misnomer; he sold mainly moleskin trousers, boots and the like. The business commenced by following the ebbs and flows of the gold rush; John may have traded around the Walhalla, Omeo and/or Dargo areas between the 1860's and 1880's.

John chose to settle in Rosedale, Victoria where he and his business partner Andrew Gay bought out the drapery section of Henry Luke's general store. The business was a success; they also purchased a grazing property nearby at Flynn.

John married Eleanor Gray (1849-1888) in 1876; Arthur was the oldest of four boys and two girls and was born on what would become Anzac Day, in 1877.

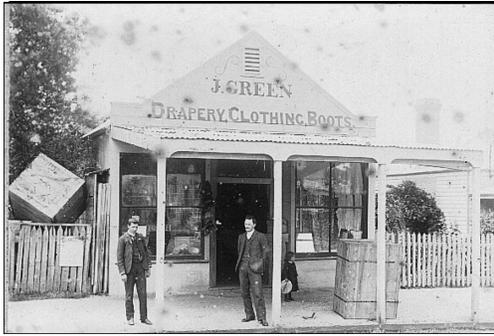
Arthur was educated at Rosedale State School and won a scholarship to Scotch College, although records show he attended only in 1892. For a time, he worked as an engineer in the Castlemaine area. Later, he returned to Gippsland to help run the Flynn property.

Arthur had met 'Kit', a dressmaker 4 years his senior, whilst in the Castlemaine area. He grew to adore her, treating her with reverence for all of their lives together. Kit's parents were Robert Stamp and Anne Coxon, originally from Northumberland UK. Robert was a blacksmith/engineer and they established a business in Maryborough Vic, manufacturing equipment for gold miners.

Kit is remembered as rather classy and quite the lady. Like many of their time they were sticklers for manners; reserved, Methodist and 'proper'. Kit was involved in community affairs, the Red Cross and charities. Married in the Methodist Church, Arthur's Presbyterianism won out every Sunday thereafter.

Later in life, her grandchildren had to be quiet because 'granny wasn't well'. She had her own sitting room across the hall from the main bedroom where she spent much of her time.

In 1873 construction of a railway from Melbourne to Sale was approved and this resulted in the development of Morwell. This rural town between the hills of West Gippsland and the plains to the east was built on timber, butter, cordial factories, bricks and pottery manufacture, and railway logistics services. Brown Coal was to come later.



Morwell Historical Society (MHS)

Arthur arrived there in 1898 to assist, taking over as manager in 1901. The shop and house were co located on a large block.

Arthur was interested in history and became a keen photographer. His photographic equipment was 'state of the art' for the town at the time; during WW2 he took many portraits of local families for dispatch overseas. Portraits of Ian are likely his work.

Marrying on 30 Apr 1902, together they had five children; Eleanor Annie (Webster) (16 Feb 1903), Kathleen Ida Green (2 Aug 1904), Jean Florence Elizabeth (Chester) (28 Jul 1906), Arthur 'Barras' Green (28 May 1909) and David 'Ian' Arthur Green (27 Aug 1911).



Arthur Green MHS

Ian was youngest, eight years younger than Eleanor. With three considerably older sisters, but only two years younger than Barras, the two boys shared many childhood experiences and remained very close.

Ian quickly developed into the family favourite, something all his siblings seemed happy to acknowledge without the rivalry one may expect; no hard feelings were ever expressed. This may have been helped by Ian's character – many sources note that Ian was friendly, outgoing, universally popular, and something of a 'natural' at developing mutually beneficial relationships with others. Ian was also known for having a wide circle of friends, and being able to obtain their cooperation, assistance, and support when he needed it. Feeding the chooks, cleaning out the chicken coop, running errands; many things. This ability to attract people from all walks of life and obtain their willing cooperation never left him.

Photographs of the time show dogs, farm animals, shorts and bare feet for Ian. It is clear Ian loved the dogs. His sisters are present in many photographs – much better dressed and looking far better behaved. Ian is usually smiling and relaxed, sometimes with his head slightly cocked to the left. Ian and Barras were certainly active boys, they were allowed some space and were certainly mischievous well into their teens and perhaps into adulthood. Arthur is absent from most shots – presumably he was behind the camera.

In 1911, Morwell's population was just over 1,000 people; a typical country town of the time. A far larger proportion of Australia's population lived outside the capital cities then. In a town of that size, most people, if they did not know other townsfolk, they knew of them.

Townsfolk were never far from surrounding farms and bushland. There were hunting trips, picnics and chores around the house and in the backyard. There was Presbyterian church every Sunday for all; Arthur remained a church stalwart all his life, and their firm faith meant Church life was forever and unchanging.

The Evans and the Billingsley families were also early settlers in Morwell. George and John 'Jack' Evans were friends, as was Russel Billingsley; Russel's sister eventually married Jack and they had four children. Many of their parents' generation had seen service in the Great War and are commemorated on the Morwell Cenotaph. Similarly, many of Barras and Ian's generation were to volunteer to serve only 21 years afterwards. 'Jack' was to join the RAAF in WW2.



Barras, Ella, Kit, Jean, Kath, Ian circa 1923 SH

The Greens shared their house with Aunty Betty Stamp, Kit's sister, who was a long-term boarder in return for performing housework and helping to run the family. Nobody recalls Kit doing the housework. Kit and Aunty Betty taught the children, then the grandchildren, to knit, sew and crochet. All the Green Children were taught how to behave and were expected to conduct themselves properly in a social setting.

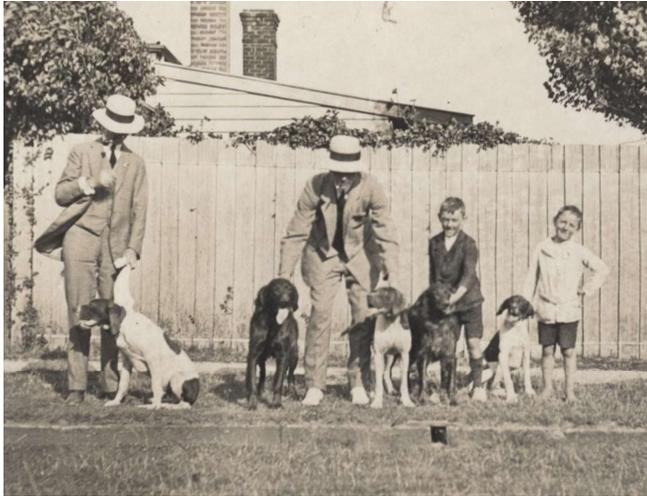
Later, Morwell based grandchildren were compelled to visit for afternoon tea every day after school, with no excuses for non-attendance. There was good china, good manners, butter knives and jam spoons; and no little fingers sticking out from the best cup.

The Greens lived the small-town life typical of the period; clearly, they were comfortably well off and well regarded in the community.

Kit and Arthur set an example of service to the community and charity to others, with no recognition sought or encouraged. They were habitually very generous and charitable to those less well off; this was not widely known as they were modest, reserved, and never ones to 'blow their own trumpet'.

Kit was active in the Red Cross, as was Aunty Betty. They also engaged in fund raising activities for various causes, as well as various "women's groups" of the town. Throughout WW2, they were known, and thanked for regularly sending comforts hampers to the troops of the 2/7th Battalion.

Academic strength ran in the family, and with the benefit of several scholarships the Greens were able to afford to educate all of their children in the city. This represented quite a feat for the period, and it set them apart from many other residents.

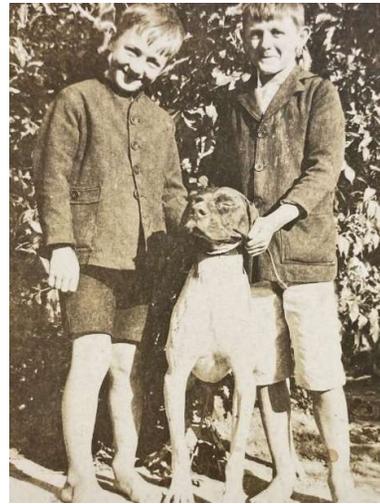


Uncle Gus, Arthur, Barras & Ian SH

Arthur's brother, Uncle Augustus Ian 'Gus' Green, who was a Melbourne GP, used to often visit Morwell to hunt with Arthur – his wife was Nell Green. Arthur would secure the dogs at home while Gus stayed nearby in the Hotel – this was quite a swanky thing to do in those days and appeared rather incongruous when there was plenty of room at Arthur and Kit's house.

Family stories indicate that Uncle Gus was rather partial to the recreational use of his spare morphia. This may explain why Uncle Gus was not thought to be a 'good fit' in Kit's house.

Arthur led a structured life and ran the house to a firm and unchanging schedule. He clearly enjoyed outdoor pursuits such as hunting and fishing; he worked hard; he was known as a community leader and was involved in many aspects of public life in Morwell. He wanted his children to become responsible for themselves and then the community; significantly he wanted his daughters to be well educated, carry a qualification and be independent if they desired.



Ian and Barras LT

This may have been as a result of observing the many widows of WW1 who struggled to make ends meet.

Despite the boys' obvious interest in dogs, cats were the only full-time pet residents of the Green household. There were always cats in the rear shed, happily employed keeping the rat and mouse population in check. As usual for the time, nothing was spayed, so birth control was done retrospectively, as and when required.

School Days – Morwell 1917 - 1924

Ian's first years at school were in the final years of what was known as the 'Great War' 1914 - 18. It was supposed to be the 'war to end all wars'. At war's end, Cenotaphs appeared in almost every town in Australia, marking the loss of the cream of their generation – a scale of loss hitherto unknown. 75 men are commemorated on the Morwell Cenotaph from WW1. Of these men, 67 returned home to their families, and eight lost their lives.



Ian Bunny Hunting LT

Arthur donated ten pounds towards erection of this memorial in Nov 1919. The cenotaph did not tally the burden carried by those who thought at the time they were lucky to return. At least as many returning soldiers took their own lives after the war, as were killed during the war. Many found they could not unsee what they had seen, escape the nightmares or see normal life as anything like normal again.

Many others tried to get by, but family lives everywhere were profoundly affected in many ways as the returned soldiers struggled to deal with the demons they brought home, then spent the rest of their lives trying to escape. Wives and children joined them in paying the price.

Offsetting this tragedy swelled a national pride emerging from the war. As a nation not 20 years old, Australia saw itself as having made its mark on the world stage. The campaigns of 1918 had placed the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), in the forefront of victory. General Monash was the first general knighted in the field by the King in 200 years; no commander has been honoured in this way since. Such was the impression left by the AIF. If Australia was ever to go to war in the future, the bar had been set very high.



Morwell State School c 1925 MHS

Ian attended Morwell State School (2136), Commercial Rd until age 13, finishing in Dec 1924.

At the time it was normal for state schools to teach through to year 8. Many country students would then leave school to commence work; relatively few progressed to secondary education.

Whilst at school he played cricket – also for the church team – representing each in the first XI.



Morwell S/S circa 1922 – Ian second from right, standing Middle Row SH

During the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1919-20, the school was used as a hospital/quarantine facility.

The Green children were consistent; all of them were 'clever' and strong performers at school. Ian was Dux of Morwell State School in Grade 8, 1924, and as a result gained a Qualifying Merit and a Government Junior Scholarship to Scotch College.

Scotch was the obvious choice as Arthur briefly attended in 1892, as had Barras (1923-25).

School Days – Scotch College 1925 - 1927

Scotch College had only recently relocated from East Melbourne. Ian boarded for Years 9 through 11 at Leighwood House and was likely in School House.

Purchased in 1920, due to the need for additional boarding facilities, Leighwood House (381 Glenferrie Rd) was an ornate single-level brick Victorian house with a tower, built by 1882.



Leighwood House prior to purchase by Scotch



Scotch College 1921 looking North East

Once more appropriate boarding houses had been constructed, Leighwood House was demolished in 1938, and the property was subdivided and sold.

Ian arrived towards the end of the first major building program. The Senior School foundation stone had been laid by Sir John Monash in 1920.

It was built in honour of those who had served in WW1. Memorial Hall was also built between 1920 and 22.

The hall had been proposed as a 'testimony to the skill and intrepidity of all who went from the College to the war'.

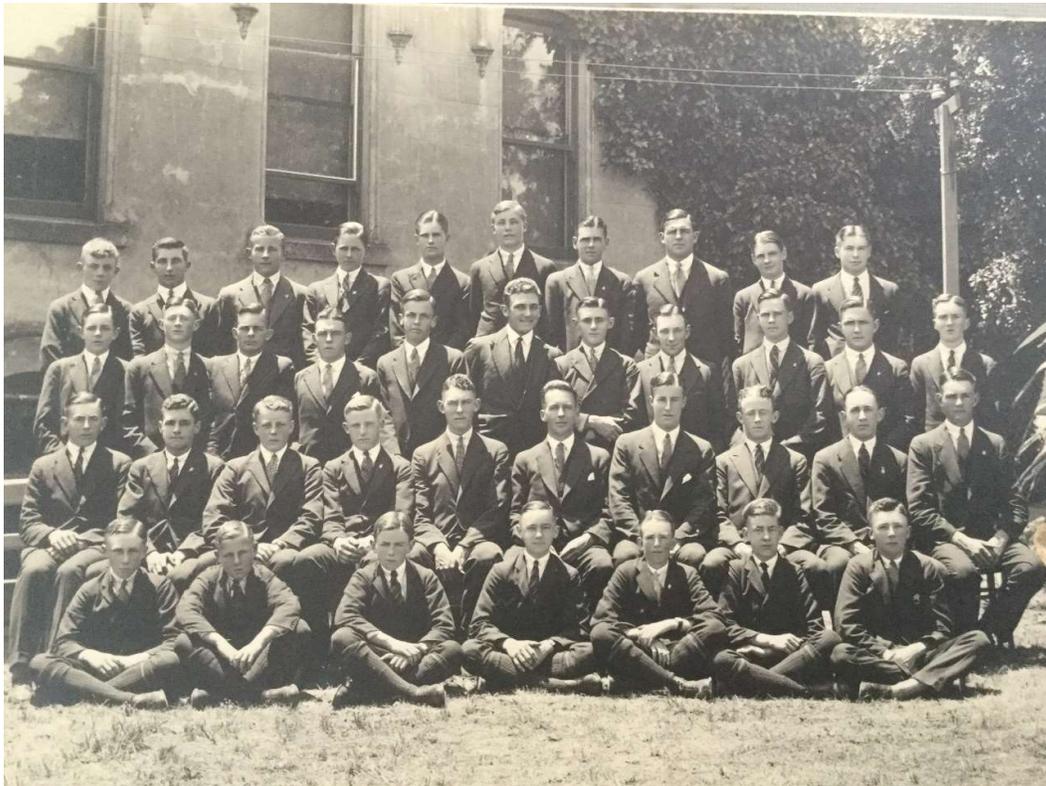
The roll of honour was unveiled on Anzac Eve 1936 to perpetuate the memory of Scotch College masters and students who had lost their lives in WW1.

Sir John Monash remains one of Scotch College's most eminent Old Boys, having led the First AIF Corps in France through the last half of 1918 to some of its greatest victories.



WW1 Roll of Honour beneath the stained glass windows

In the 1920s, Monash was General Manager of the State Electricity Commission (SEC), establishing the new electrical network which would also transform Morwell over the coming 40 years. The SEC developed Victoria's brown coal reserves for electricity generation, and by 1930 had extended a power grid across the state. Ian would have seen Monash – he visited Scotch regularly – and his later interest in the militia may have been influenced by these encounters.



Scotch College, Leighwood House Boarders 1927. Ian second row from front, second from right, sitting JT

A summary of Scotch College's aim in the 1920s was to educate boys whilst imparting wisdom. It aimed *"to educate the whole man; combining intellectual, moral and religious training, with a sound healthy physical development"*. Scotch has always sought to instil an inner life of self-discipline and an outer life of service to others. The School Motto had evolved to become *Deo Patriae Litteris* – For God, Country and Learning.

Like most schools of the time, rods were not spared, and children were not spoiled. Forms of physical violence between teachers and students were seen as routine; low grade bumps, knocks and whacks were sometimes for no apparent reason. One boarder was caned 24 times in a term. Even so, if they were (ever) given the choice, boarders preferred the cane to detention, particularly a weekend detention.

Religious Instruction was an important part of school; particularly for boarders. Every school day started and ended with prayer, with two hours a week for Bible lessons. Boarders had to learn verses, the *Presbyterian Shorter Catechism*, hear scripture and attend Church every Sunday.

Whilst the structure and the content were Presbyterian, teachers well understood this may not be taken to heart in all cases. Engendering a strong appreciation of 'right from wrong' was the

clear secondary objective for all. None of this was abnormal for Ian, as his upbringing had been strictly conservative and Presbyterian. Nevertheless, his grades for Scripture declined rapidly over his three years.

Ian's academic marks show him initially as a very strong all-rounder, particularly in maths and science subjects. Latin was a clear exception. As Ian matured, it seems his marks tended to taper off towards Year 11; perhaps as an active young man he was losing interest in education or had found other interests to distract him. In 1927 Ian passed English and Agriculture at Leaving Certificate level, and chose to leave at the end of this, his Year 11.

Ian seemed to have a wide circle of friends and formed many lasting relationships with his classmates, none stronger than with Louis Philip Joubert whose family owned a Melbourne based business, Joubert and Joubert Pty Ltd, that imported cars. Ian remained close friends with Louis after school.

Cadets

All boys over 14 were required to complete six hours of military training per week, and the Scotch College Cadet Unit had already been in existence for 41 years when Ian arrived. There was no choice: Ian was in.

Cadet life was dominated by drill, with some elementary military training alongside. All the drilling culminated in the annual Tattoo. There was a great emphasis on an individual's presentation – 'clean boots and shiny buttons were about all that was required'.

Others saw the Cadet program as a great advantage to obtaining a commission in later life. Live shooting was occasionally part of the training, using WW1 vintage .303 Lee-Enfield rifles.

Camps were sometimes their first experiences away from home for 'day boys'; not so the boarders who viewed any homesickness with studied contempt. The camps taught most of the boys some basic skills for living and working with others in the outdoors. The experience was usually too spartan to teach any love of the outdoors, particularly when conducted during the extremes of the Victorian climate.

One Cadet from the period noted, "When I left school at 16, I was able to cope with my new life as a jackeroo in western Queensland before war service because of the Cadets' experience in dealing with people". Cadet training seems to have agreed with Ian; it may explain why he later chose to stay on in the Militia.

In Mar 1927, members of Scotch College senior cadets attended a week long camp with Melbourne University Regiment (MUR) at Seymour, where they participated in Brigade exercises. Presumably, Ian attended.

By Year 11, it seems that Ian's interest levels were waning, and it was time to start making his own way.

After WW2 a new Roll of Honour was added to the rear of the Memorial Hall.

Ian's name came to be included with many other Scotch Old Boys who lost their lives during this second catastrophic war to occur within a single generation.



Anzac Day, Scotch College SH



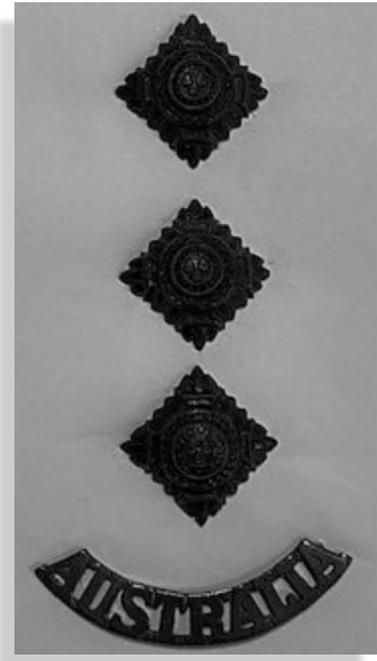
Every year on Remembrance Day, crosses are put in the lawn in the adjoining Quadrangle by Year 7 students. There is one named cross for every Old Boy and staff member who died in the World Wars, totalling over 600 crosses.

There are so very many of them.

Several of Ian's great nephews have placed Ian's cross amongst the many others in recent years.

3

'Sol'



Universal Service Scheme & National Bank of Australasia

After finishing at Scotch at the end of 1927, Ian was 16, so he remained in the Senior Cadet system. Exactly where is not clear; there were numerous units and his service record shows him as an active cadet until Jun 1929, when he was about to turn 18.



Morwell Advertiser 23 Mar 1928



20 Park St, St Kilda West

The NBA at the time was third largest bank in Australia, had 333 branches, and employed over 2,000 staff.

NBA regulations of the time noted: "Punctuality, aptitude to do the work of the next officer in rank, neatness in attire and disregard of the clock are recommendations...for the young officer. Handwriting should be studied and improvement aimed at with the object of acquiring a legible and simple style of writing and of signature. Prompt obedience to senior officers is necessary. Banking offers many opportunities for success in life, but this is not attained by the agency of any royal road, but through the exercise of the qualities referred to and the building up of character. (Managers should) see that the young fellow officer chooses good company, takes a proper interest in games and study, cultivates habits of thrift (and) pays cash for board and lodging when due. Junior officers should be encouraged to diligently interest themselves by frequent reference to the book of regulations in acquiring knowledge of our system, and to ask questions when experiencing difficulty".

The Great Depression spanned the first six years of Ian's career, with signs of a recovery not starting to emerge until 1932. In Australia, wheat and wool prices halved between 1928 and 1930. Unemployment grew, there was industrial unrest, and bank funds fell as overdrafts increased. By

Ian commenced his career at the National Bank of Australasia (NBA – now National Australia Bank) St Kilda Branch in Mar 1928.

Ian was appointed as a Probationer; he was to learn then perform Junior/Clerk responsibilities. Junior/Clerks stationed in country branches were also responsible for chopping wood for the branch fireplaces.

As a 17-year-old, Ian was also required to register for his Universal Training Obligation; at the time he was living at 20 Park St, St Kilda. The property is still there – a terrace house. One can assume he was a boarder.

In Nov 1928 Ian was transferred to the Caulfield branch, then appointed to the permanent staff as a Clerk on New Year's Day 1929 – it appears he remained at Caulfield.

He was lucky in his timing: the economy was slowing but did not enter the Great Depression until after the Wall St Crash in late 1929.

1930, deposits fell further as customers started to live by drawing down their savings; the following year several banks had experienced 'runs', with at least one failing.

On 27 Nov 1929, Ian enlisted in the Militia for a three-year term. At 18 Yrs 3 Mths, 194723 Private (Sig) DIA Green is listed as Single, a Bank Clerk for the National Bank, 279 Collins St Melbourne, living at 71 Barkly St, St Kilda. This property also remains and, it looks like he remained a boarder.

He was 5 ft, 8 ¼ ins (173cm) tall and 138 lb. (62.5kg), making him rather a racing whippet of a bloke.



71 Barkly St, St Kilda

Universal Service Scheme, 1911–1929

Before WW1, Australia was the only English-speaking country with a system of compulsory military training during peace time. The legislation was passed in 1911 and the system was to remain in place until 1929. It provided compulsory military training for:

- Junior Cadets for 12–14-year-old schoolboys
- Senior Cadets for 14–18-year-old males, and
- Home Defence Militia, (Commonwealth Military Forces), for 18–26-year-old men.

There were few exemptions.

Many failed to register for training despite being liable for punishment, and between 1911-15 there were 34,000 prosecutions with 7,000 jail sentences imposed.

During WW1, two referenda were held over conscription for overseas service, causing enormous bitterness within the community and particularly the Labor Party. This is partly why Labor chose to reject compulsory training, they abolished the universal service scheme immediately when elected to Federal Government in October 1929. Numbers immediately declined.

Ian was therefore not required to join the Militia, nor remain long after he joined in any event – he became a 'true' volunteer. Unlike many, Ian found the life of a part time soldier to his liking, so he chose to stay on. He was allocated to 4 Div Sigs, K Section in Moore St South Melbourne. This site is now the West Gate Freeway (Westbound) off ramp to Power St.

The Australian Corps of Signals (Later to become RASigs) was formed in 1925. They were responsible for all forms of signalling – visual (semaphore flags), telegraph, telephone, signal despatch, and later wireless communications from Divisional Headquarters to Brigades, and for artillery. Throughout WW1 most communications employed were visual, telegraph and despatch (by runner, horseback or motorcycle). Almost all the equipment and techniques used during the 1920s remained unchanged since the end of WW1.

Ian would have specialised in the laying, connection, testing and repair of line (cable), semaphore flags and/or in being a telegraph operator – using morse code, telegraph key and coding/decoding

messages. Although new radio “wireless” technology was becoming available for morse code, defence spending remained low during this period and this type of kit was rare.

The basis of training was the weekly evening parade, some paid, some voluntary. A private was paid 5/- per day with an additional allowance of 3/- if deemed ‘efficient’. Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers were paid at higher rates. There were also weekend bivouacs, courses and annual camps to attend. The quality of training varied due to the low attendance rates and shortages of qualified and experienced instructors at every level. Pay parades were held twice a year and at the end of annual camp.

Private soldiers form part of ‘Other Ranks’ (ORs). ORs make up the bulk of any Army and, in the end, are the ones who perform most tasks. However, to assume that it is a life of drudgery and subservience would be wrong; Australian soldiers have never been known for blind obedience. Part time OR’s in particular come together as a highly diverse group of people from a wide range of social, educational and occupational backgrounds. There would be trades and graduates, clerks and mechanics, students, professionals and unemployed at all levels.

Even in training, a soldier’s life is hard and uncomfortable, the hours long, the weather – well it just happens and one simply becomes a part of it. In the field soldiers sleep on the dirt. However, after adapting, they find they can perform like the next man, and might grow to enjoy the experience. Workdays are long, always followed by several hours of ‘piquet’ (sentry duty) every night, watching over and protecting one’s comrades. Morning and evening ‘stand to’ means they see many sunrises and sunsets come and go; contemplation comes naturally in the silence as they lie and watch nights transform into day, then return. Sleep is always hard to come by.

Soldiers exist to work as a team, 24/7. They find common ground in shared work and discomfort then grow to trust and rely on each other. They see each other at their best and at their worst, soon learning to look after each other, sharing everything. ‘Jack’ people – that is, self-centred people, whose motto is, ‘I’m alright Jack, you can look after yourself’ – have to change, or they do not last. All sorts of pre-existing social, political and religious barriers dissolve through mutual reliance. Friendships grow, and for those who can stick it out, lifetime friendships result. Those who reach this stage ‘have each other’s back’ and their friendships and effortless cooperation are their warmest memories.

Ian initially worked as a part of the Army’s basic building block – the section (Sect). Sects usually consist of some 7-11 soldiers, commanded by a corporal (Cpl). Life revolves around the Cpl and other members of the Sect. Sect roles, structures and responsibilities differ greatly depending upon the Corps – the below example is of an AIF WW2 Infantry Sect.

Section	Commanded By/ 2IC	Own Weapons	Other	Sub Units U/Command
			N/A	N/A

AIF WW2 Infantry Section

As an OR a soldier is of course influenced by those above him. He expects to be worked hard; he also expects that those who lead him will know their job and will not waste his efforts – or his life – unwisely. Effort, emotion, energy and ultimately lives can be wasted through indifference or incompetence.

In the peacetime part-time Army, success is highly dependent on who ‘turns up’. In lean times, the work to be performed is usually shared between fewer people. Fewer people mean more hours on picquet, more effort to move, set up and operate equipment, fewer breaks and more weight on one’s back. The first outward sign of a team with an effective leader is a higher rate of attendance.

Ian worked closely enough with corporals, sergeants and lieutenants to observe and judge their competence and leadership – anybody can ‘pull rank’. Ian would note who was effective, who was not, and which nuances might suit his personality. He would learn that sound leadership usually starts with balancing a range of competing ends. It may mean conserving energy, resources and effort or expending them to achieve a task. He learned that leaders are not there to be liked (although some are far more likeable than others); but competence and winning respect was critical. Diggers usually see straight through their leaders and are quick to judge.

Sound leadership starts with caring for one’s troops, making sure they are always fed, trained, rested and equipped as best as possible. In the field, diggers eat first, then leaders if their administration is effective and sufficient remains. Competence, having credibility, setting an example and being able to communicate enables expectations to be set. A leader can then work them.

‘Sol’

Solomon ‘Sol’ Green (1868-1948), was a well-known and wealthy Jewish bookmaker and philanthropist in Melbourne around this time, known for his dry wit and quick patter. Somewhere along the line this nickname stuck to Ian; records consistently show this, particularly amongst his Militia colleagues and ‘Sol’ was known, if not used by the Green Family.

As Ian’s career developed the banking industry stabilised, having withstood the worst of the Great Depression. Sacrifices were made by all, and salaries of bank officers were cut, but widespread branch closures and staff dismissals were avoided. An 8% decline in staffing was mostly achieved by simply not replacing those staff who retired.

Back in Morwell, the Green family home continued to run on its predictable schedule. Arthur was a man of regular habits and the cadence of the house reflected this. Despite the distance, Ian remained under this umbrella and was well looked after. As a young bachelor living in Melbourne, Ian sent his washing and ironing home on the train to Morwell, to be returned neatly folded, wrapped and ready to wear again a few days’ later.

For a time, Ian’s sister Jean was studying pharmacy at the Victorian College of Pharmacy. She would collect Ian’s washing (presumably adding it to her own) and later return it. One morning she called to collect the washing, only to find Ian still in bed. This was of no particular surprise to Jean, however she *was* surprised to discover he was entertaining female company at the time....

Like Arthur and many others, Ian and Barras smoked; Unlike Arthur, both he and Barras liked cars, and like many young men of the period and had learned to drive, possibly learning with Louis Joubert.

Ian served as a 'Sig' until Feb 1931, then transferred to Melbourne University Rifles (MUR), in Carlton. MUR was part of 2nd Brigade, 4th Division, also having its place as part of Melbourne University – although University attendance was not a prerequisite. The notion that Ian's portrait would one day hang in the MUR Commanding Officer's office would have been met with disbelief.

He served at MUR as an infantry private for two years and in Feb 1933 he was appointed pay corporal. It is not unusual for the part time Army to utilise one's civilian skills; however, Ian probably preferred to do something different from his day job. The records are inconclusive on whether he was promoted to corporal or remained a private.

MUR was structured along the lines of an infantry battalion but was also a de facto Officer Training Unit. The training was less formal than today's First Appointment Course; however, prospective officers were provided training and qualification courses to ready them for the centralised examination boards they would have to face. It is likely Ian was subjected to some of this training.

Cessation of compulsory training in 1929 caused a steady and ongoing decline in numbers through the early thirties. As paid training was limited to a six-day camp and six days of part time training, one had to be in it for more than the money to do this.

Many Militia units had well organised social calendars and MUR was well known for the volume and the quality of theirs during the thirties. Officers and Sergeants Messes ran successful annual Dances, plus each Company (of which Ian would have been a part) held functions which were highly sought after and attended by many non-military friends and acquaintances of both sexes. These tended to have a strong undergraduate flavour but were not elitist.

MUR set consistently high standards of drill and presentation and regularly provided honour guards for Anzac Day, royal visits and other state occasions. MUR provided a guard and a firing party at General Sir John Monash's funeral in Oct 1931 - Monash had been Honorary Colonel of MUR since 1921; perhaps Ian participated.

MUR Annual Camps were then held at Fort Franklin on the Portsea Peninsula. This facility is now known as the 'Portsea Camp', having since been the Lord Mayor's Camp for Underprivileged Children. The surrounding area (now well built out with holiday homes) was mostly bushland and was perfect for all sorts of training, including mock battles using blank as well as live ammunition.

Around this time on an Annual Camp a route march between Rye and Portsea, Major S.A.F. 'Saf' Pond chose to disagree with the Commanding Officer's Orders that 'Officers will ride (a horse)' (believing it elitist and ungentlemanly), so he dismounted to march with his troops. This action could not have failed to impress Ian, who by this time would have marched many miles carrying his own webbing, pack and rifle as an OR.

People like 'Saf' set lasting standards for Ian's later leadership; Saf was destined to lead his unit into Japanese captivity in 1942, and out again in 1945 holding the lasting respect of the soldiers he led bravely, and cared for deeply.

In 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany – later, Japan and Germany announced they would leave the League of Nations. The following year with the death of President Hindenburg, Hitler declared himself Fuhrer of Germany.

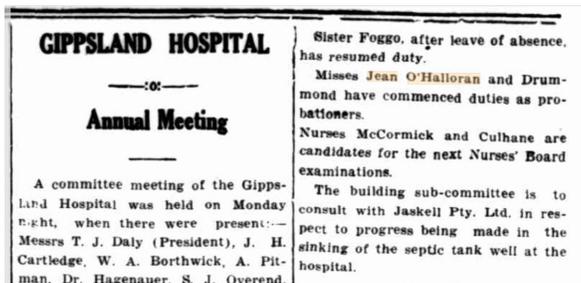
In mid-1933, Ian was transferred to NBA's Sale Branch in Gippsland as a clerk. Whilst 13th Gippsland Light Horse Regiment was present in Sale, there is a gap in the records and it appears Ian chose to suspend his service. Perhaps Ian did not consider himself a horseman.

If Ian had any choice in this, he probably chose to live in Sale as it was relatively close to Morwell and many boys from the area had attended Scotch, so he was likely to be amongst friends. The bank transferred him mid-1933 and on departure from Melbourne he was presented with a gold coloured cigarette case. Arthur and Kit were very pleased to have Ian only 40 miles from Morwell; Arthur hoped Ian would one day return to work in the family business.

Ian initially lived at a property in Desailly St Sale and he seems to have embraced his return to Gippsland. He quickly became a committee member of the tennis and golf clubs; he became a regular golfer with a handicap of 12-15 and became a regular in A Division, not infrequently appearing in the winners' list.

Soon, Ian moved into a room at the Club Hotel, almost directly across Foster St from the National Bank where he worked – this was common practice for a bachelor at the time. Ian's room was small and sparse with a shared bathroom down the hall.

Not long after Ian moved to Sale, Miss Jean Elizabeth O'Halloran (b 6 Jan 1916) commenced as a probationer (trainee nurse) at Gippsland Hospital Sale, in Feb 1934. Jean had completed her education as a boarder at Sacred Heart College, Ballarat. She was academically strong, active, musical and also a keen golfer and tennis player.



Jean joined her parents, William and Elizabeth O'Halloran in Sale - they had owned the Club Hotel since 1927.

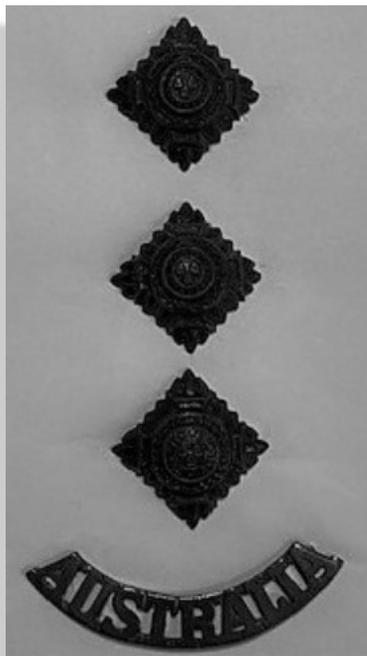
They were very active in the Sale community and well regarded. They were both keen golfers and supporters of the Sale Golf Club.

Gippsland Times 14 Jun 1934

It would be impossible for Ian to not have met Jean O'Halloran – they likely met in mid to late 1934. Sometime after that, a romance blossomed.

4

Always Ready



“Let us be clear about three facts. First, all battles and all wars are won in the end by the infantryman. Secondly, the infantryman always bears the brunt. His casualties are heavier, he suffers greater extremes of discomfort and fatigue than the other arms. Thirdly, the art of the infantryman is less stereotyped and far harder to acquire in modern war than that of any other arm.....The infantryman has to use initiative and intelligence in almost every step he moves, every action he takes on the battlefield.

We ought therefore to put our men of best intelligence and endurance into the Infantry.”

Field Marshall Lord Wavell; Ian served under his command in North Africa

Always Ready

In January 1936, Edward VIII became King of the British Commonwealth and Emperor of India, before abdicating in favour of his brother, George VI that Dec. The year 1936 was a particularly busy, interesting and rewarding time for Ian.

On 24 Jan 1936 the bank promoted Ian to Ledger Keeper when another staff member was transferred. Barras visited Ian the week this was announced, staying at the Club Hotel.

The business of banking in a country town in the 1930's was completely manual and is far different from that of today. A similar branch in Wellington NSW¹ *“...had a manager, accountant, teller, a junior and three ledger keepers. One ledger keeper was a male who drove to another smaller town twice a week with satchel and revolver.*

“Exchanges” were held daily at the Commercial Bank. Each bank sent a representative with a satchel containing cheques presented at their bank. The cheques were in bundles for each bank with a total shown. These were exchanged and returned to the respective banks to be sorted and processed by the ledger keepers.

Pat became a ledger keeper/typist and looked after the smallest (Q-Z) ledger. The other ledgers were A-F and G-P. The ledgers were big leather covered books in which ledger keepers hand wrote with black and red ink. The morning after entries were scribed in the ledgers they were checked, known as “call up the ledger”, this was done either with the accountant, or manager. Any overdrawn accounts were noted and referred to the manager. This process was always completed before doors opened for business at 10.00am.

“We had a beaut adding machine. It was about three-foot-high with a handle on the side and a wooden side table”.

A door opened from the manager's office onto the verandah. People who were “in trouble” (overdrawn) used this door to meet with the manager, who sometimes took them for a drink.

¹ History of 2-14 Swift Street, Wellington NSW occupied by NAB (Marie Hoffman)

The town had a Bankers' Club and staff from all banks participated. Banks would challenge each other at lawn bowls and use the banks revolvers to shoot at the shooting range. On social days, such as the Bank Holiday, they played tennis".

The Gippsland Times shows Ian taking leave the week/s commencing Mon 17 Aug 1936.



Miss Una Cartledge, of Sale, has been visiting her parents last week.

Mr. Ian Green, of the National Bank, is at present on holidays.

Miss Fallon, who has lived in Sale for several months, left for Melbourne on Saturday.

Miss Wyn Collier is an inpatient in the intermediate section of the Hospital, where she had been removed last Wednesday.

ago, a teacher of singing at Sale.

Mr. Steward, of the National Bank staff, Sale, has been transferred to Lancefield, while Mr. Green has taken up his belt and bucks into more important duties at Sale. Mr. F. Grant of the Camberwell branch, will be joining the Sale staff.

Mr. Bertis Green, of Morwell, is taking a week's holiday at the Lakes Hotel, Lakes Entrance.

A few of Sale's curious young people called unexpectedly at the home of Mr. and Mrs. S. Bardswell on Saturday night to find out what sort of life they were making of house-keeping and married bliss. A treasure hunt, organised by Miss Gwen Gilchrist, was the main attraction of the evening. Those who indulged in the fun were Misses Gwen Gilchrist, Dorothy Webster, Sheila O'Bryan, Martin, Maude Foster and Messrs Webster, Ted Davy, Colin McLeary, Green and Ron Phillips.

Gippsland Times 20 Jan 1936

Gippsland Times 16 Mar 36



By mid-1936 Ian was active in the Tennis and Golf Clubs; he became a Committee member of the Golf Club, acting as Secretary for a time. Ian had also assisted in organising the Golf Club fancy dress ball the previous year.

He was also on the committee of St Andrews Tennis Club, serving as Treasurer, responsible for organising the post-Christmas tennis tournament. The *Gippsland Times* of 17 Dec 1936 clearly shows his role. If this was not enough, Ian would soon be president of the 52nd Bn Sale Detachment Social Club.

Juggling his work in the Bank with Militia parades, military studies and out of hours preparation, plus committee work and an active sporting and social life would make Ian a busy man. His name appeared regularly in the *Gippsland Times* sporting results, however he stands out as 'putting back' into almost every activity he participated in.

Expanding the Militia

As part of the expansion of the Militia, in 1936, plans were created for the Militia's 52nd Battalion to establish a presence in Sale – later to become B Company. The Army required a 'core' of responsible people to act as recruiters, then leaders once enough enlistees had been attracted. It seems that Ian's previous military experience was known, so he and Mr I B 'Snow' Matthew² the local Texaco Fuel Agent, were offered the chance to recruit the first 40 soldiers, then train and lead them.

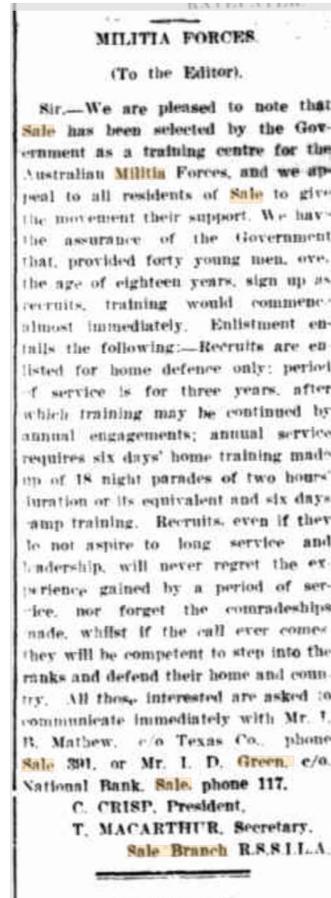
During WW1, Matthew had served in 8 Bn, landing at Gallipoli on 25 Apr 1915. He was promoted Cpl then wounded at Pozieres (1916) and again at Hazebrouck (1918) (Both scalp wounds) in France during WW1. Also awarded the Serbian Silver Obilich Medal for Bravery, 'Snow' knew something of 'real soldiering'.

² 915(WW1)/VX117221(WW2) Ian Burn Stuart Matthew B. 3 Apr 1895

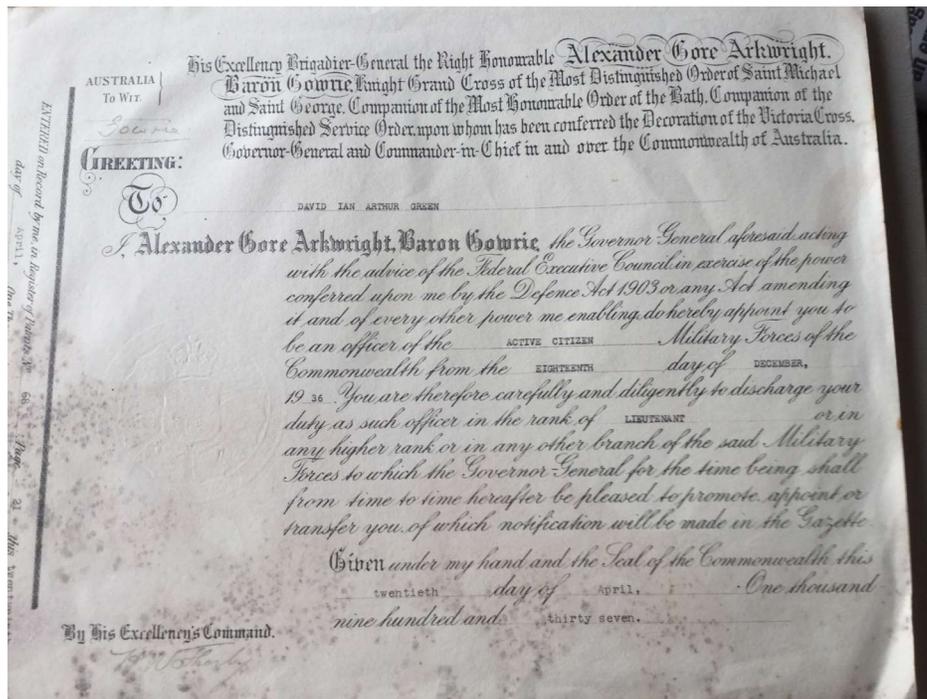
Australians who wished to become Militia officers must have first served in the ranks, however the British tradition of the 'gentleman officer' was usually then followed. The social backgrounds of senior Militia officers tended to be middle class – engaged in commerce or the professions – or the upper class, including wealthy landowners. They tended to be educated at private schools and universities, so Ian would have found himself highly competitive for a commission.

Somehow, Ian found himself selected. Ian was appointed as a Lieutenant to 52nd Battalion on 18 Dec 1936 – both his posting and his Commission were effective this day. Ian became a Militia infantry officer. King George VI had ascended to the throne just seven days before, on 11 Dec 1936.

All Australian Army officers receive a commission, personally signed by the current Governor-General of Australia. Ian's was signed by Brigadier General Alexander Gore Arkwright Hore-Ruthven, 1st Earl of Gowrie VC GCMG CB DSO & Bar acting on behalf of the Monarch, King George VI.



Gippsland Times 19 Nov 1936



Ian's Commission SH

The role of Australian Infantry today is “to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture him, to seize and hold ground, and to repel attack by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain”. It has not changed much through the years. Infantry receives unflattering commentary from time to time, but the art of soldiering has evolved considerably, and for many years the small Australian army has been structured and trained far differently from other nations with large standing armies.

The Sale Golf Club’s annual fancy dress party late in the year would have been a social highlight to cap off the year: He had been promoted at work, was about to receive his commission, was busy with his social life, and was building a profile taking on committee responsibilities with his sporting clubs.

(Gippsland Times Mon 23 Nov 36)

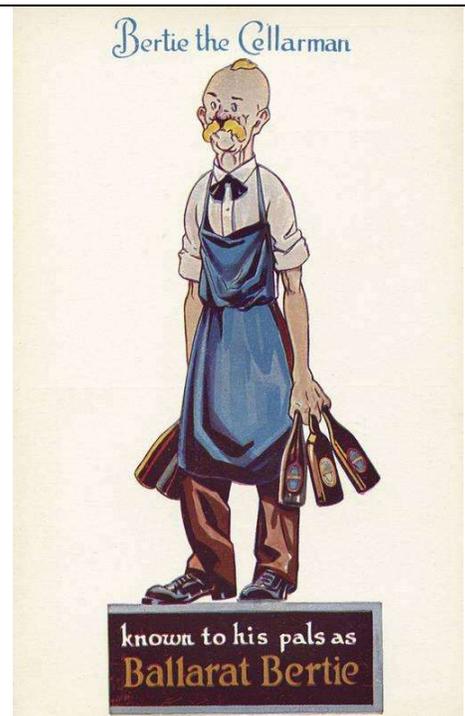
The Sale Golf Club's annual fancy dress frivol took place on Friday night in the Mechanics' hall. Every one of the many dancers appeared in costume and the scene infested with the spirit of carnival and enlivened by bon comerade, was worthy of any film. To the onlooker the spectacle was fraught with interest. A touch of comedy here, the grotesque and the macabre rubbing shoulders with the pretty-pretty charming early Victorians on excellent terms with villainous pirates, dashing senoritas flirting with businesslike militia, then a touch of the Orient, Bohemia partnered with convention and overall a sense of glamour and the joy of living.

Verily a night to be jotted down amongst the souvenirs if ever there was one!

Amongst the dancers were: The Ladies; a Spanish lady, a peasant, a charming Maori, a gypsy, Oriental

splendour, Mary, Mary Quite Contrary, a Dutch girl, gorgeous court apparel, a delightful Harlequin, a dainty Dresden shepherdess, a demure French maid, a fetching columbine, a cellophane lady, a bewitching South Sea Islander, a French artist, a beauteous Rhumba queen, a dashing senorita, a Cossack dancer, period costume, a Russian dancer, a scout, Titania, a Shakespearian maiden, night, Rebecca at the Well-well, a graceful Gainsborough lady, a young Crusader, Spanish costume, a Hawaiian, a call boy and a Swiss maid.

*The Gentlemen; A Roman soldier, a Dutch boy, a Chinese costume, as Glasgow belongs to me, Captain Desmond VC, a boy scout, a comic golfer, a very life-like pirate, a mad hatter, Sambo, a pirate, Bill Bowyang, a Red Cross nurse, a Russian, a soldier, mayoral robes, a Mexican man, and **Mr Ian Green, as Ballarat Bertie.***



Cheers! One can imagine Ian’s hairdo being well suited to the character.

Ian commenced duty with 52nd Bn, recruiting for the new Sale depot prior to him being appointed Lieutenant in Dec 1936. The Sale Detachment would only be established after a vigorous

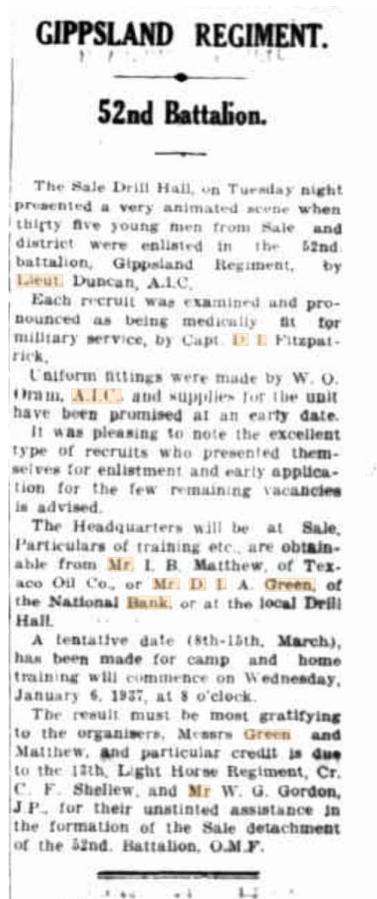
recruiting campaign which secured 35 volunteers, with Ian a key contributor. Recruiting activities became ongoing as the Militia sought to expand in line with the revitalised defence policy as it evolved through to the late 1930's.

The Sale Drill Hall was located at 10 Punt Lane; the original building was constructed in 1915; the site is now under redevelopment for a TAFE facility. This was perfect for Ian; the Drill Hall was 250 metres from the bank, and only slightly further from his abode. It was all within the one block.

52nd Bn was a part of 10 Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Stan Savage, and it is in 52nd Bn the first records of Ian's nickname 'Sol' appear.



AIF Platoon Structure



Gippsland Times 10 Dec 1936

As a newly commissioned subaltern, Ian's first role was Platoon Commander. A Platoon consists of three sections plus a command element, and on paper is usually around 30 strong. In the early days Ian's platoon strength may have been as low as 15 to 20, however as they continued to recruit, numbers increased quickly and by mid-1938 there was a waiting list to join B Company.

A part time officer's responsibility and focus are recruiting and training. Planning and allocating training responsibilities to NCO's, conducting training, and ensuring the training is effective are key tasks. Leaders could be judged by attendance rates and the competence of their diggers.

In addition to training, officers were heavily involved in planning and arranging other training activities, annual field exercises and the like, as well as attending TEWTS³ and arranging recruiting. There was a considerable time investment required in order to run an effective Platoon – most of it was in Ian's own time.

³ TEWT: 'Tactical Exercises Without Troops'

Wednesday night was training night for B Company 52nd Bn in Sale, and Ian's arrival had been no coincidence, being the first of an ongoing series of recruiting initiatives intended to build up further Militia numbers in Gippsland and elsewhere, as the political situation in Europe continued to decline.

Japan invaded China in 1937, this was later acknowledged as the beginning of World War II in the Far East.

A Brief History of the 52nd Battalion 1921 – 1939



52nd Bn was raised in 1920-21 during the reintroduction of compulsory military service after WW1. Assigned the identity of the 1st AIF 52nd Bn (of the Somme, Pozieres, Bullecourt, Messines and Ypres), they inherited their King's and Regimental Colours and had the same circular colour patch, horizontally bisected with white over blue halves.

The most famous WW1 exploit of the 52nd was an audacious night counter-attack at a few hours' notice on Villers-Bretonneux on 24-25 Apr 1918, whose success recaptured the town and helped change the course of the war.

The 52nd received the title "The Gippsland Regiment" and motto "Always Ready". The 52nd was part of 10 Infantry Brigade, 3 Militia (CMF) Division. During Ian's time, Brig Savage was 10 Bde's Commander.

After compulsory training was halted in 1929, declining numbers forced units to link, becoming 37th/52nd Bn, but by mid-1936, expansion of the Militia allowed 'de linking', and the 52nd expanded into East Gippsland. In 1938, 52nd Bn was granted linkage with the (British) Queens Own Cameron Highlanders and permission to use its Regimental March – 'March of the Cameron Men'.

For this period, Ian had to balance two demanding and sometimes conflicting roles: his career with the bank and his responsibilities to the Militia. The demands were only resolved by applying a considerable amount of his spare time. On Wednesday nights Ian would find himself 'in the moment' and spending most of his time dealing face to face with his diggers. Much of the planning and administration required had to occur after hours at some other time and without pay.

Social Life/Mess Life

An important part of Army life was, and is, mess life. A mess is a sort of club in effect, allowing off duty personnel a forum in which to socialise. Messes are usually provided for OR's (up to Cpl), Sgts (Sgt to WO1) and Officers. In the Militia, a mess would normally open after a training night, or at the close of a weekend training activity for several hours. Whilst 'talking shop' in a mess is not necessarily encouraged, in a part time Militia environment it provides the time and the place to discuss or debate aspects of training or soldiering which duty hours just do not allow.

If one is attending a course at a barracks, there are dining facilities provided in an established officers' mess and usually accommodation as well. In effect it is a type of club accommodation. In addition to a bar, there may be a lounge area or similar – if an officer is away from home, this becomes his home.



Ian in Winter Mess Kit or 'scarlets' JT

An active Battalion officers' mess (regular or part time) schedules several functions through the year. These may comprise a formal dinner during an annual training camp, social evenings, perhaps a mixed function including partners, and formal Dining in Nights.

Reports of the time highlight the social aspects of soldiering at all levels. Mixed functions were common, and invitations well sought after.

'Dining in Nights' have many customs and traditions associated with them, most of which have been inherited from the British Army. The candelabra and silverware are used.

They are extremely formal and run late; but after the formalities, there are usually 'mess games' such as improvised indoor rugby and mock trials. The Brigade might run other combined mess functions. Some aspects of mess life would continue during the war, particularly when engaged in training activities out of the line. For Dining in Nights, Ian had a tailor make him a set of winter mess dress or 'scarlets'.

Ian attended 52nd Bn's first continuous training camp after the 'de linking' from 37th Bn at Warragul Showgrounds, starting Mon 3 May 1937. The accommodation was under canvas as usual, and many new recruits attended wearing their civilian clothing while awaiting issue of their uniforms. On the Friday, the 'new' 52nd Bn held a Military Ball in the Warragul Palais – attracting many attendees from as far away as Oakleigh and Sale. The hall was adorned with white and blue streamers (representing the Bn Colours). Bn members attended in full uniform.

As was usual for the part timers, it seemed that just as soon as they were 'coming up to scratch' with their skills, it was time to go home again. The camp ended with a march through Warragul, and Ian then took some leave to travel with his brother Barras to Queensland by sea.

Ian had been appointed Lieutenant subject to him completing the required examinations. On his return from holidays, he sat and passed subject C for Lieutenant, followed by Subject A in Nov 1937, making him fully qualified for his rank. These examinations were practical in nature, and mostly oral, with considerable study required beforehand.

Jean

In the meantime, Jean O'Halloran turned 21, passed her Nursing exams and commenced nursing at Gippsland Hospital. Her parents sold the Club hotel in 1936 and moved to Beaconsfield Pde St

Kilda, where they were to live until 1940 when they purchased the Vine Hotel Wangaratta. Having made many firm friends in Sale, they regularly returned to visit.

By mid-1937, Ian and Jean were occasionally playing together in a mixed foursome competition and also mixed doubles in local tennis competitions. Ian was a very keen golfer (A Grade) and tennis player (B Grade). He was usually competitive in the results and served as golf club captain for a year. Ian won respect for his organisational ability, for his attention to detail and for the sheer volume of tasks he took on. Almost every weekend free of Militia service was spent playing golf or tennis, either socially or competitively.

Ian's life was busy, successful and quite full – clearly by now Jean was a big part of his life – and it was close to complete.

SALE GOLF TOURNAMENT

A Most Successful Competition

The 24th annual tournament of the Sale Golf Club was held last week concluding on Saturday.

Cameron	111-21-86
Mixed Foursomes, Post Entry	
1. Green-Miss J. O. Halloran	51 1/2
A. F. McDowell-Mrs. Shellow	54
I. Matthew-Mrs. Seow	55
K. Donoghue-Mrs. Donoghue	56
J. Russell-Mrs. Herbert	56
H. Maynard-Mrs. O'Halloran	58
J. D. Hope-Mrs. D. A. Davis	58
R. P. Blake-Miss Johnstone	58

Gippsland Times 9 Aug 37

PERSONAL

Mr. D. I. A. Green, of the local branch of the National Bank, after attending the Warragul camp with the local infantry, in which he is a Lieutenant, is now on annual leave. He and his brother are on a sea trip to Queensland. During Mr. Green's absence his position is being filled by Mr. G. M. Ross, of the relieving staff who is not new to the district, having been stationed at Stratford some few years ago.

Gippsland Times 24 May 1937

Miss Jean O'Halloran celebrated her 21st birthday on New Year's Eve, at a cheery party given in her honor at her parent's home, Beaconsfield Parade, St. Kilda.

Gippsland Times 11 Jan 1937

Cooper, Mary F. McMahan, Sale Hospital; Jean E. O'Halloran, Mary P. Scanlon, Helen S. White, Stawell, and Allied Hospitals. - Winifred J. Selzer, Waverley, Vic.

Gippsland Times 3 Apr 37 (Passed Nursing Exams)

After a three weeks' holiday in Melbourne, Miss Jean O'Halloran has returned to Sale to join the staff of the Gippsland Hospital.

Gippsland Times 14 Jun 37

Contrasts

It is not clear when Jean and Ian became an 'item', however it is clear their feelings for each other grew during this period. The two of them attended many social occasions, occasionally with Jean's parents in attendance – particularly golfing occasions or social activities. Jean looked to be quite at ease in the outdoors and in Ian's company – they seem to have complemented each other. It is also clear that Jean's parents held Ian in high regard.

There was only one problem in this relationship: Jean's family was Catholic. Now that Australians of Irish Catholic descent have occupied the highest positions in the land, it is almost forgotten that until the 1970s the Catholic-Protestant divide remained well entrenched, with lasting social consequences for those daring to marry across it.

Irish Catholics formed a larger proportion of Australia's population than the UK and had a greater influence both at community level and nationally. Many Irish Catholics were active in the labour movement, finding themselves opposing Anglicans and Presbyterians who at the time were more likely to be involved managing businesses and in conservative politics.

Sectarian antipathy characterised Australian society and politics in Ian's day. Until the 1950s more Catholics tended to vote Labor and most Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists for their

conservative opponents. The divisions and mistrust were ingrained, with roots deeper than simply religion, so many simply chose not to mix.

'Mixed marriages' between Catholics and Protestants did occur and surprisingly 21% of marriages of the period were mixed. Catholic women tended to marry 'out' more; however, negative consequences were the norm. People were disinherited from families, grandchildren subject to ridicule – some members were literally 'cut' from family photos. Children of mixed marriages could carry significant stigma. These communal divisions and tensions passed slowly, as they were too deeply rooted in society and continued into the 1970s.



Jean O'Halloran and Ian WC

The Greens chose not to mix, even though Arthur's brother was in just such a marriage. That relationship was dealt with in the same way many Green family issues were - they were simply not spoken about.

If a topic was ever raised by children or grandchildren, it was simply dismissed.

The O'Hallorans were successful businesspeople who were well respected in the community and their family embraced Ian. However, within the Green family – conservative, Methodist/Presbyterian, the news of their relationship would not have been received well; this was quite normal. Of course, Ian was well aware of this.

While it seems Ian and Jean were in love, and Ian's siblings were aware of the relationship, the matter of their relationship and their future together was either not raised, or not pressed, with Kit and Arthur.

In 1938, the Munich agreement handed Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany, and British Prime Minister Chamberlain proclaimed 'peace in our time'. The Spanish civil War was at its height and *Time* Magazine declared Adolf Hitler Man of the Year.

The pace of global rearmament, which had recommenced in 1935, accelerated from here.

The German annexation of Austria in Mar 1938 further fuelled fears of war in Europe. Training and recruiting continued with the ongoing pattern of Wednesday night parades, bivouacs and training in the 'bull ring' (a small training area close to the depot).

MILITIA NEWS

Training Camp at Warragul

(Contributed)

Monday morning was all excitement for the Sale militia when about 40 men of the 52nd Battalion embarked for the annual camp at Warragul. All were keyed up to high pitch with the hope of bringing home some of the trophies.

On arriving at Warragul the battalion was marched off to the camp in the show grounds, led by the Yallourn band which is the ceremonial band of the 52nd Battalion. On arrival we were all issued with blankets and equipment. Most of the day was spent in getting the camp into ship shape order.

We are then lined up and marched off to the mess room where we sat down to a good hearty meal.

After tea the town picket is paraded and told off for their duties, then all men wanting leave are paraded for inspection. If properly dressed leave is granted. On returning from leave all men are chastised by the sentry and O.K. All men were reported back O.K. which goes to show the good conduct of men, no one having to go to guard tent.

At 4.30 in the morning reveille sounds and all have to get out, dress, roll up tent sides, make up blankets, and clean up tent. We then parade again for breakfast. After breakfast a general inspection of tents is made. We then parade out on the arena for inspection, then are marched up into the hills for manoeuvres, etc. The Sale lads considered they are hills after coming from Sale where it is so flat. We are then marched back for dinner again, paraded and marched up in to the hills again.

Thursday the Sale lads have to go on guard duty and go through the ceremony of changing the guard. Up till 2 o'clock Thursday morning the men picked for guards could be seen with willing helpers polishing their buttons, packing kits for the coming ordeal. This showed how keen the lads were to win. After drilling all day the guard is called out. Its new boys do your best. The guard is marched out on to the arena before the eyes of the judges, Generals, Majors, Colonels, Officers and the public.

As the orders are given all the men move as one man, and stand as a figure of stone, not a move, not the wink of an eye, every man doing his best to win. On the finish of the inspection a roar of cheers goes up. Colonel McCormick acclaiming this is the best guard turn out he has seen for ten years. Other officers were of the same opinion. Considering these guards had only three months training and some only six weeks, these boys, this is a most remarkable

achievement. These lads and guards deserve all praise that is due to them also Lieutenant Matthew, who was in command.

Friday the battalion parade for a small route march through the town past the saluting base, the whole town turning out to see the march past. At 4.30 the Yallourn guard, who are considered to be the crack guard, are paraded for the changing of the guard. Now the contest is on every movement is perfect. The order is given, fix bayonets, slope arms. A bayonet flies from a rifle, narrowly missing a man in the rear rank. Again not a move, the men do not even flinch. The guard marches off to their post, the crowd cheers again, (Who wins?) Now its the judges contest, Sale wins. No, Yallourn wins. After a long debate it was decided to make it equal, instead of one cup, two cups were given. Somewhere a slight fraction of a point extra was credited to Yallourn guards, they receiving the first cup and Sale the second. All honor to Yallourn guard in winning the first cup.

Saturday a parade is called of men selected out of each company for best dressed soldier. Some men only had 15 minutes to dress in full marching order. These men are lined up and the judges inspect every detail separately. One man is stood out, then another till only one is left. This man is picked as the best dressed man of the battalion. Private Atkinson, of Sale, wins this contest outstanding. Are we proud of him? To win this distinction out of 400 soldiers is something for anyone to be proud of.

Special thanks is due to the Chaplain who supplied chowies every day to the troops and at all times had a hearty smile. Also to the officers who did everything possible to make the camp life happy. The medical staff deserve all praise possible, their attention to all being of the best. We need not mention the boys of the cook house. All we hope is that we have the same crew for the next camp. Their cooking was fine, meals were varied and at all times plenty to eat.

May we thank the good citizens of Warragul for their generous gifts of trophies also their generosity and hospitality they gave the troops while in camp at Warragul.

James Cloak
HOUSE, LAND AND GENERAL
COMMISSION AGENT.
Agent for—
Fyfe's Broom and Co.
Practical Aluminium Company Ltd.
ALCOVE BUILDINGS
RAYMOND STREET — — — SALE

“The Commanding Officer of the 52nd Battalion, Col McCormack DSO, accompanied by all officers of the regiment, visited Traralgon and inspected the camp site, and the training area for the camp to be held from Saturday, 29 January to 6 February 1938.”

Gippsland Times 20 Dec 1937

Annual training camp 1938 was held at Traralgon from Mon 31 Jan to Tue 8 Feb 1938; weekend bivouacs were scheduled prior in order to get the most from the activity and Ian attended as a Platoon Commander in B Company. The camp focussed on weapons training, Platoon exercises and marching. Officers attended several TEWTs – more on them later. Camp was hot and thirsty, with tented accommodation again provided in the Showgrounds.

During a Lewis Gun shoot, one unfortunate digger managed to kill two cows grazing in a nearby paddock. The transport section was busy dealing with horses used for movement of all stores as well as providing them for officers. This presented opportunities to get even, with plausible deniability:

“As well as taking care of the horses, we had to ensure that the officer's equine charges were sufficiently tractable for them to ride. Many of the Bn officers didn't have the equestrian skills to control the friskier mounts so, if an officer,

either through his actions, or inactions, caused himself to be disliked, we usually saw to it that he was allocated a less tractable beast. Some 'out of grace' officers were fortunate enough to remain in the saddle, however others quickly learned the meaning of 'coming back down to earth'". Getting even in creative ways like this was a popular and entertaining sport.

In May 1938, Ian took three week's annual leave and visited Bathurst NSW. What is now the Mount Panorama Race circuit was opened in Mar that year. There are photos of sports cars in Ian's collection and it is perhaps possible he visited for a motor racing meeting or to visit the nearby Blue Mountains area.

At the end of Sep 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed the 'Munich Agreement' with Hitler; this allowed Germany to occupy the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia in return for 'peace in our time'. In Oct 38 the Australian Government announced plans to expand the militia to 42,000 men and by Nov this had grown to 72,000 men as the international situation deteriorated further. Ian continued to plan and undertake recruiting activities. Pay and conditions of service improved. As 1939 approached, 52nd Bn boasted 1,100 all ranks, still 300 short of 'establishment'.

By Mar 1939 the Government announced success in reaching 70,000 enlistments.

* * * * *

The ladies of the social committee of the Defence Welfare League, were responsible for a bright and happy evening on Thursday last when the troops of the 52nd Battalion had their first social gathering at the A.N.A. Hall. Mrs. I. Matthew, President of the Defence Welfare League was in charge, and worked hard for the success of the evening as did the secretary, Mrs. R. Page, and the committee of ladies, who prepared the supper. The financial result was in the vicinity of £13, which was very gratifying. Dancing occupied the major portion of the evening. There were also competitions. The "Night Owls" supplied the music in their usual excellent manner. Captain I. Matthew and Lieut. I. Green did their duty nobly. Also noticed were Captain J. Login of 13th Light Horse and Mrs. Login. The troops of the 52nd Battalion turned up in large numbers and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves, their new uniforms looking very spruce and smart. We wish them all the best when in camp at Mornington this week.

Gippsland Times 13 Feb 1939

As a result of the successful recruiting, another continuous training camp was announced at Mornington from 12-17 Feb 1939. Camp was established East of the Nepean Highway just north of the axis of Main Street. Conditions were again spartan and Ian attended with B Company. With a touch of irony, attendance was low, partially as some long unemployed members had finally found work, and taking leave was now not possible for them.

This camp included route marches, field formations, day and night patrols, defensive exercises and attacks by Platoons then Companies using blank, then ball (live) ammunition. On the last day they marched down Mornington's main street.

A number of men were selected for an Infantry weapons training course at Portsea from 9-18 Mar 1939 – Ian did not attend this – however a 'Casual' Battalion Camp was announced to be held over Easter 7-18 Apr 1939 at Old Seymour training area. This camp was in effect a 'catch up' for those who had missed Mornington in Feb. Amongst many others, Sgt C W Macfarlane, of Glen Iris was also in 52 Bn. He would later join 2/7 Bn in 1939 as a corporal.

While the Portsea course ran, Hitler invaded and occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia in contravention of the Munich Agreement.

In the bank, the drought and low prices for Australian exports were making business conditions difficult again. In a rural centre, Ian noticed the effects on clients as their deposits decreased and overdrafts again increased.

A highlight of the year was marching in the 1939 Anzac Day parade in Sale. *"To many the march brought its moments of sorrow and also anxiety as to the future"*. Ian and Lt 'Snowy' Matthews led the contingent which numbered around 100 troops, many of whom were newly recruited by Ian. Speeches on the day clearly show growing concerns for Nazi Germany and the future for Europe.

By Jun 1939, 52nd Bn was 1,600 strong and regarded as the largest, and most proficient Militia battalion in the country. At the end of Jun, a reorganisation due to the sheer size of the unit reallocated all members east of Trafalgar to 37th Bn (The East Gippsland Regiment).

The following month, Ian sat and passed his exams for promotion to Captain, and in Aug, he was farewelled from Sale in several functions as he had been 'transferred to Melbourne'. It appears that the National Bank had planned to move Ian, although it is not clear where. We can assume there was not a promotion involved as there is no mention of this.

By now Jean had moved to Melbourne to study Midwifery at the Women's Hospital, living with her parents on Beaconsfield Parade. Ian's transfer was to be effective in mid-Aug and it would have brought them closer again – it is possible he had requested this. Either way, his time in Sale was coming to an end.

SALE HONORS THE ANZACS

Inheritance Of Liberty And Security

A Sacred Tradition

Citizens of Sale paid reverent tribute to the Anzacs on Tuesday. Behind the tramp of the Aussies as they marched along the street one could almost hear the fearful tramp of mighty forces in Europe on the verge of another war. To many the march brought its moments of sorrow and also anxiety as to the future. Tuesday's march was made more spectacular by the inclusion of a large number of recruits who recently enlisted for the defence of Australia. The march was a spectacular yet solemn tribute to those brave men whose greatest sacrifice had been counted necessary in the defence of the Empire.

Throughout the morning public bodies and private individuals—young and old—placed wreaths on the Cenotaph in memory of the fallen. Headed by the Sale Town Band the Sale contingent of the 52nd Infantry Battalion A.M.F. led by Lieuts. I. Matthews and D. I. A. Green looked spic and span in their new uniforms and their soldierly bearing elicited high encomiums. They were followed by a detachment of the 13th (Gippsland) Light Horse led by Lieut-Colonel Stewart. The Boy Scouts also took part in the march.

At the Cenotaph two minutes' silence was observed and the Last Post sounded by Trumpeter A. Reece.

On the return march a halt was made at the South African monument where a similar tribute was paid.

The attendance at the service at the Victoria Hall was greater than last year, probably due to the war clouds looming on the distant horizon.

to be alive to the possibilities, to rally to the standard of King and country rate to buy guns and ammunition and ships and planes. In Australia defence preparations are on a scale never before anticipated. In all countries the huge cost of the last war largely remains unpaid. What of the League of Nations? That post war creation whose establishment was hailed with delight by the majority of the nations of the world, at times of crisis it found itself unable to function. It was quite ineffective in its endeavors to hold the nations together to work out a peaceful solution of their problems. One great power left the League, then another, then a third—these defections were sinister—still we hoped all would be well. At disarmament conferences Britain agreed to a reduction. She kept her word and through the years other countries have been building up their naval and military and air equipment. For a time Neville Chamberlain's well meant and noble

PERSONAL

all occurred at the Gippsland of Miss. Rome Willis, who was 16 years of age, daughter of Mr. A. J. Willis, and, to whom sympathy is extended. The funeral took place in the St. Andrew's Cemetery.

is extended to Mrs. H. of "Copeford," whom it is necessary to take to the St. Andrew's Cemetery.

From "Gippsland Times," Friday, April 26, 1939.

During the holidays the Maffra three matches, by St. Kilda, and also a Melbourne. The River made 40 and 48 not out.

of Maffra, was for the green-waters' cottages on the railway line. For a turn Mr. A. F. Morley 2 was accepted.

being invited for the railway line Albert.

Shell at 6500. The creation of new ideas, etc. at (Cov.)

of railway employees discharged in New to the service.

of Mr. A. W. ing Secretary for cultural Society's a profit of £25 figure on ground.

EXAMS. FOR NURSES

Results Announced

The following candidates were successful at the recent examination for the certificate of competency as a midwife, arranged by the Nurses' Board.

WOMEN'S HOSPITAL. — Nora L. Armstrong, Agnes Berth Beechervaise, Dorothy Nora Cates, Nellie Margaret Elizabeth Collins, Evelyn M. Cooper, Beatrice M. Doves, Mary E. Eirington, Mary Dorothy Fahie, Margaret Glen Fenton, Mary Ann Fenton, Phyllis I. Gent, Marie Ankefiel Henderson, Jean Anthea Hollindrake, Dorothy Mills-Murphy, Marie Mitchell, Joyce McIntosh, Jean O'Halloran, Mavis Marie Peters, Thelma Ethel Pratt, Dorothy Phyllis Rogers, Jean Margaret Lucy Rogers, Elsie Jean Schmitke, Doris Irene May Sealy, Isabelle Myra Skeels, Meryl A. Swinton, Catherine Weir, Effie Hemsworth Welsh, Amelia E. Whitechurch.

QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL. — Joyce Chapman, E. Baver, Vera May Roseham, Laura E. Cahill, Helen D. Colman, Jean May Connor, Jean Elizabeth Crawford, Miriam Agnes Duggan, Joy Laskey Edwards, Margaret Alexis Forrest, Florence Ellen Garimore, Helen Mary Gocher, Merlyn Mary Patterson Holmes, Morna Margaret Patterson Holmes, Agnes Hulet, Gertrude May Jennings, Thelma Maida Kemp, Florence E. Mason, Clarice Irene Philbey, Nellie Lois Pitty, Alfreda Capell, Rodditt, Rosalinda Louie Ross, Kathleen Bridget Ryan, Georgina Hester, Elfrida Shaw, Emmie Steady Spiller, Doris Rita Stoben, Vera Isabel Summers, Lotus Vyvyan Tippet, Joan Isabel Twine.

MILITIA NOTES

Brigadier Savage to Visit Sale

(By "Musket")

Brigadier S. G. Savage, D.S.O., M.C., V.D., Commander of the 10th Infantry Brigade, will visit Gippsland this week and will include in his itinerary a visit to Sale on Wednesday evening.

The Brigadier has made two trips to Sale within the last few months in furtherance of the recruiting campaign and on his forthcoming visit will see the fruits of his labors in well equipped and drilled troops in the various centres.

Tonight (Monday), Brigadier Savage will visit Heyfield, on Tuesday Traralgon and Maffra, Wednesday at Sale and Thursday at Bairnsdale.

It is interesting to note that Brigadier Savage fought on the other side with Sale's esteemed resident, Mr. Les Marchant, and older Gippslanders will remember the parents of the Brigadier as district residents, where he was born.

Brigadier Savage obtained his commission on Gallipoli, when he was on General Gellibrand's staff, and later saw service in many foreign countries. His fine war record gained for him the Distinguished Service Order, Military Cross and Volunteer Decoration.

NEW SYSTEM OF TRAINING

On Wednesday evening a new system of training was introduced to the Sale detachment and trainees have voted its popularity. The detachment is divided into four squads and rifle instruction, light machine gun drill, description of ground and ceremonial drill instruction is given. By interchange of instructors all are given an equal opportunity to learn.

RECRUITS COMPLETE MUSKETRY COURSE

Gippsland Times 8 May 1939

MILITIA NOTES

Pay Night and Pic Night

(By Musket)

The Sale Drill Hall was the scene of intense activity on Wednesday night when the annual pay night for members of the 52nd Battalion fell due, incidentally the entertainment of troops by the Defence League and Auxiliary with a "pic night."

An excellent master formed up to receive their pay and after the serious business of the night was over troops formed up to receive their pay and a cup of tea.

Prior to being treated Mr. J. R. Bennett, chairman of the Welfare Committee was introduced to the boys by Detachment Commander, Lieut. I. B. Matthew. Mr. Bennett expressed pleasure at the fine parade and briefly outlined the doings of the committee for the formation of a shooting competition over the miniature range, the entrance of teams from the Infantry, Light Horse, Returned Soldiers Defence League. Mr. Bennett thanked the detachment for its support, congratulated members on their successes at the recent military gymkhana and expressed the hope that next year the event would be even bigger. Work of the ladies for the boys was eulogised by the speaker who paid tribute to their work under the guidance of Mrs. I. B. Matthew.

After the repast had been partaken of Lance Sergeant H. Schroeder turned thanks on behalf of the detachment and at his instigation three cheers were given the ladies.

Amongst those present at the evening were Lieut.-Colonel J. Stewart, Captain Lewis and Lieuts. J. Sidgwick, I. B. Matthew and D. I. A. Green.

Gippsland Times 10 Jul 1939

MILITIA NOTES

Mr D. I. A. Green Farewell

(By Musket)

At a social evening after parade on Wednesday last, members of 52nd Battalion took the opportunity to farewell Mr. D. I. A. Green, who has been transferred to Melbourne.

The informal gathering was presided over by Sergeant J. McMillan, in a few well chosen words expressed the regret of the troop in losing Green and his remarks were supplemented by Lieut. I. B. Matthew. Matthew drew attention to the departing guest's long and honorable service in the establishment and command of the Sale detachment and spoke of his sterling qualities both in private and military circles.

Corporal H. Mason, on behalf of N.C.O.'s, added suitable words. Private A. W. Purphy on behalf of recruits from the recent drive. Private J. R. Warnett added the sentiment of the Stratford contingent.

In presenting the departing guest with a travelling rug and leather case, Lieut.-Colonel A. J. Stewart spoke of the high regard in which Mr. Green was held by all ranks and his departure was a definite loss to the detachment and district.

Rounds of applause and "For He Jolly Good Fellow" greeted Mr. Green in his response when he said his time in Sale had been a particularly happy one and his association with the detachment would be one he would never forget.

Gippsland Times 17 Aug 1939

MILITIA NOTES

Lieut. D. I. A. Green Transferred

(BY MUSKET)

Sale detachment, 52nd Battalion A.M.F., is shortly to lose one of its keenest and most efficient workers Lieut. D. Ian Green, who has received notice of his transfer to Melbourne.

In private life Lieut. Green is attached to the staff of the National Bank, and the militia is only one of the many public institutions that witness this capable officer, who has given the town valuable service over a period of six years.

Lieut. Green's achievements in the 52nd Battalion are numerous and noteworthy. Formerly a member of the Melbourne University Rifles, Lieut. Green was called on with Lieut. I. Matthew to form a detachment of the 52nd Battalion in Sale in 1936 and its most successful start was made, the forerunner of the present strong detachment. Again these two gentlemen's services were called by headquarters to enlarge during the recent recruiting campaign. Here again their response was excellent and successful in no small measure due to the two lieutenants' keenness.

Both in the drill hall and in the field Lieut. Green has proved himself a capable leader and tutor and his administrative work is of high standard. His popularity with members of the detachment is evident by the full co-operation he receives.

The Lieutenant leaves Sale for Melbourne on August 15th.

Gippsland Times 27 Jul 1939

* * * * *

The successful conduct of the Sale Golf Tournament makes it worth noting the officials of the club and tournament. They were: President, Mr. Crofton Lee; vice-presidents, Messrs W. C. Leslie and L. P. Jensen; captain Mr. J. Jackson; honorary secretary Dr. G. Burke Baldwin; honorary tournament secretaries, Messrs. L. Crosthwaite and John Jackson; committee Messrs. A. B. Lyon, L. Crosthwaite, F. McDowell, I. Green, A. J. Jenkin, N. Fowler and A. J. Widdis.

Several members of the Sale Golf Club last week gathered to say goodbye to Mr. Ian Green, who is shortly to leave Sale. His continued assistance to the club and his good fellowships were appreciated, evidence of which was in a presentation made to him.

Gippsland Times 21 Aug 39

UNIT COURSE AT SALE

Militia Leaders Complete Ten-Day Camp

By Musket

Over 100 officers, N.C.O.'s, and potential leaders on Monday completed a ten-day unit training course at Sale Showgrounds in preparation for the 37th Battalion camp. Chosen personnel were taken from Yallourn, Morwell, Maffra, Traralgon, Heyfield, Bairnsdale and Sale detachments and covered a most comprehensive and advanced training course.

Captain H. Wrigley controlled the camp in most efficient manner as Chief Instructor, with Lieut. I. B. Matthew as second in command. Lieut. D. I. A. Green acted as Adjutant.

The facilities offered by the showgrounds were ideal for the purpose. The huge pavilion became the barrack room, while the luncheon pavilion was correctly used for messing. The surrounding terrain provided good field training areas and the use of the paddocks was gratuitously given by landholders and their action was appreciated.

During the course, Brigadier S. G. Savage, Commanding Officer of 10th Infantry Brigade, visited the camp and noted the training being administered. The Brigadier expressed delight at the syllabus and appointments and congratulated Captain Wrigley on the conduct of the camp. Another visitor of note to the school was Lieut.-Colonel A. W. J. Stewart, C.O. of 37th Battalion who was an interested spectator of night exercises.

On Sunday morning members of the Sale Red Cross Society and a number of nurses from the Gippsland Hospital visited the showgrounds and were instructed in the use of respirators as effects of gas. Over 40 of the visiting ladies donned respirators and entered the gas chamber where tear gas had been released. The harrassing effect of the gas was felt and streaming eyes told their own tale.

Comfortable sleeping quarters, excellent meals and competent instructors made the school an enjoyable one and not one fault could be found with the conduct or organisation of it.

Gippsland Times 5 Oct 1939

'...as a result, Australia is also at War'

On 1 Aug 1939, all of B and D Coy 52nd Bn were transferred to form the nucleus of the newly constituted 37th Bn (The East Gippsland Regiment), which was to have depots in Yallourn, Traralgon, Sale, Maffra and Bairnsdale. Ian's Militia transfer would come through on 24 Aug 1939, although at the time he was anticipating his transfer to Melbourne with the Bank.

The day prior, the Government announced it would enlist another 14,000 Militia, and the required period for continuous training in camp was extended from 12 days to 32. The next day (2 Aug) Ian attended the 13th Light Horse Ball at the Mechanics Institute, Sale – this included the presentation of 16 debutantes and dancing was difficult due to the presence of 700 - 800 guests.

After Hitler's invasion of Poland on 1 Sep, the outbreak of war was expected. Sections of the Militia with either special duties, guard or other duties were 'Called Out' over the weekend 2 Sep, arriving at their depots and drill halls with all issued clothing and equipment. Prime Minister Menzies made his announcement at 9:15 on the evening of 3 Sep, that ".....Great Britain has declared war (on Germany) and that, as a result, Australia is also at war". We can assume many were crowded around a radio in the Sale Militia Depot listening to the news.

The very next day, Monday 4 Sep, Ian arranged War Service Leave from the bank 'for the duration of the war'.

Most of the Militia troops in Sale at the time would have received less than 30 days' full-time training, like all other Militia units. Two weeks later (15 Sep), PM Menzies announced the raising of one infantry division and ancillary troops, which was to become the 6th Division, Second AIF.

37th Bn almost immediately arranged and conducted a 10-day junior leaders' course at Sale Showgrounds. This course was to train selected ORs and NCO's for promotions to the rank of Cpl, Sgt and Lt – there were approximately 80 attendees. Ian, now a senior Lieutenant, acted as Adjutant for the camp – largely an administrative and organisational role for the course. Ian's duties commenced on 4 Sep as they prepared to hold and run the course.



Staff & Instructors – Junior Leaders Course – Sale Showgrounds Sep 1939 – Ian 3rd from left, front row

An attendee of the course later noted, 'Of those who instructed or attended the school, many were destined to go on to make names for themselves in the forces'. At course's end, at least 16 promotions were made.

The photo of Staff and Instructors on the course shows Ian looking slightly more padded than usual. It is possible that he had 'trained off' to a degree. Compare this to his C&SC photo a month later. One suspects he was very busy getting into shape between these two courses.

The Author had another great uncle attend this course as a student, Lieut J N 'Nelson' Capuano (Capp), from Bairnsdale.

Volunteering for the Second AIF

During this course, the raising of the 2nd AIF was announced. A telegram was sent from 10 Bde to CO 37 Bn – extract below:

“Submit to H.Q. 3rd Division names of Militia personnel (Officers) volunteering for Regimental appointments in Special Force as early as practicable.

AGE LIMITS FOR OFFICERS

<i>Lieutenants</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Captains</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Majors</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Lieutenant Colonels</i>	<i>45</i>

Personal written applications to be forwarded subsequently to H.Q. 3rd Division. Officers are requested to phone Battalion H.Q. by 1200 hours on 25th September 1939, and follow this up immediately with written application to the C.O. for permission to apply for selection to the Special Force.”

Commander 10 Brigade, Brig Savige also visited this course. We can be sure there were formal and informal discussions with those contemplating whether to volunteer for the 'Special Force' or remain in the Militia, including Ian. At the time there appeared no guarantee that either branch was more or less likely to see action, however Ian immediately applied, no doubt after receiving support from Brig Savige.

After this course ended, 37th Bn received notice to prepare for another continuous training camp to be held at Tallarook for a month from 9 Oct to 7 Nov. However, there were other plans for Ian – he was selected to be sent to Sydney to attend the 'new' Company Commanders' Course.

Company Commander's Course

Modern armies are complex, requiring the coordinated efforts of many qualified people in order to operate effectively and to win the fight. In war, leadership, strategy and tactics are critical but they must be underpinned by sound logistics and administration. The rapid pre-war expansion of the Australia's armed forces generated a need to train selected officers in the skills and knowledge required to command combat elements (such as companies or battalions), and/or to act as staff officers on brigade and division HQs. This requirement led to the establishment of Command and Staff School (C&SC), Victoria Barracks Sydney in 1938.

C&SC provided training for Regular Staff Corps and Citizen Force officers in the tactics, administration and logistics of brigades or larger Formations. C&SC provided skills and knowledge in critical aspects of their roles:

- For Commanders and Staff Officers: minor strategy, staff duties and administration in the field,
- Consistent methods of tactical thought and application throughout the Army,
- Organisation, armament and equipment of all units and formations,
- Tactical employment of all arms in co-operation with RAAF,
- Principles of training and systems to be adopted,
- Staff duties,
- Administration, and
- Movements.

The course was intense and required long hours; it was packed with information; the pace was fast and the content extensive. Exams required considerable study and there was a strong atmosphere of competition. Meeting, working and learning with a group of peers from all over the Country also made the course interesting; mess life allowed some time for social interaction – both formal and informal. The trick as usual was to find the right balance.

Ian attended No 11 Course, C&SC from 1 – 14 Oct 1939 – known as the Company Commanders' Course. As an experienced Lieutenant, Ian's potential had been recognised and he was being prepared for his next role. It is likely he was selected specifically for this course as he was promoted Captain the day before the course ended. As a Captain, Ian might become a company commander or a staff officer in a larger HQ.

Ian appears to have been one of a few AIF volunteers to attend this course, the first held during the war. Of the 18 who attended the following course in Dec 1939, 11 went on to command battalions as Lieutenant Colonels during the war.

In the course photo, on Ian's left is Capt Charles Groves Wright Anderson MC, who was to win a VC as a Lieutenant Colonel in Malaya in Jan 1942 before his capture by the Japanese during their withdrawal to Singapore.



No. 11 COURSE—COMMAND AND STAFF SCHOOL
 1/14 October, 1939.

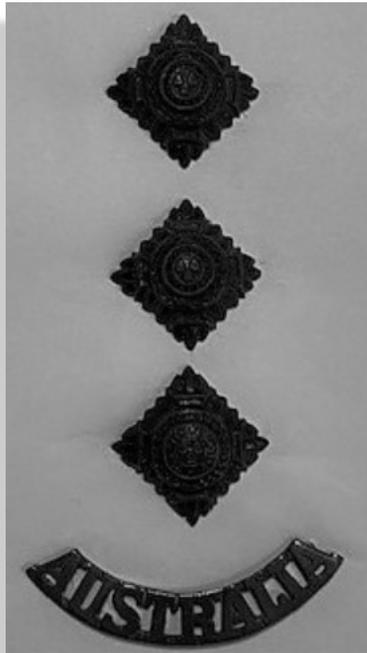
Back Row: Capt. R. C. Rosier; Lieut. W. L. Cleland, A.I.C.; Capt. C. H. Grace; Capt. G. E. Sell;
 Capt. V. A. McLeish; Capt. W. C. Dillon; Capt. N. L. Goble; Capt. W. M. Warner; Capt. P. J. J. Meehan.

Middle Row: Capt. L. G. Bruer; Capt. D. A. H. White; Lieut. D. I. A. Green; Capt. C. G. W. Anderson, M.C.;
 Capt. T. E. Williams; Capt. W. E. J. Bagnall; Capt. A. K. Browne; Capt. D. V. Watson; Capt. A. M. Porter;
 Lieut. G. Armstrong.

Front Row: Maj. D. S. Maxwell, M.C.; Maj. W. L. Tresidder; Maj. S. T. Hodgman; Maj. R. G. H. Irving;
 Maj. H. G. Rourke, M.C.; Mai. S. J. Walker, D.S.O.; Capt. F. G. Pullen; Lieut. H. R. Golding;
 Capt. A. J. Carfax-Foster, M.C., M.M.

5

Mud Over Blood



SECOND A.I.F. - Victoria Passes Quota *(The Argus 26 Oct 1939)*

Victoria passed its quota of enlistments of untrained men in the Second A.I.F. (6th Division). Yesterday the total reached 3,126, some 126 in excess of the quota. Recruiting continues to provide reinforcements. Nearly 2,000 are now in camp at the show grounds.

Letters to members of the Sixth Division, or Second A.I.F., are to be addressed "Private So and So". But by that name the soldier will be known only to the postman, the paymaster, and probably his section commander. As soon as the recruit marches into camp at the show grounds at Flemington with his squad he is given a name that is likely to stick, such as "Porky", "Long 'Un", "Skinny", "Blue", "Nugget", and so on. The "hard cases" are smart at finding nicknames.

As a first step in making the recruits hard, they are greeted with a chorus when the new draft arrives of "You'll be sorry", "You'll soon lose that beef", or "You'll get an appetite here". As the "barrackers" do not appear to be very sorry for themselves, the new recruits do not seem to be much worried by the chaffing. Probably the latest arrivals quickly realise that the "old soldiers" have been in camp less than a week themselves.

Life in the new army is pleasant enough apparently, but strenuous. Seven hours a day of drill – "Left, right, left, right: about turn; forward, halt, quick march" are the orders they hear from tireless instructors for the best part of an hour at a time. If it is varied, it is by "Keep the head up", "Step shorter", "Keep in line", "Swing those arms", and "Change step" – then a ten-minute rest.

On the principle that a change of work is as good as a spell, the squad has a turn at drill with rifles, or takes part in games, flag races, relay races, running sideways, "rats and rabbits", and other diversions. All call for a maximum of physical effort, and, because of the rivalry of sections, there are no "non-triers". Seven hours of such activity, with perhaps a run in formation around the arena for good measure, work wonders to make men fit.



Long hours of physical training.

At the end of the day "Dismiss" is a welcome command. Those known as "Porky" will probably retain the sobriquet "for the duration" but certainly not the physical characteristic which inspired selection of the nickname.

General leave until 10.00 pm is allowed after the evening meal. About 1,500 went into the city on Tuesday evening, but had great difficulty getting back on time. No extra trams were provided for the benefit of these would-be cash customers of the Tramways Board. The Railway department also allowed the opportunity to pick up some revenue to pass, as no trains were run to camp at all, although there is a siding alongside the gates. The Postal department provided extra public telephone facilities yesterday for the troops, and made a good profit on the small outlay immediately.

The canteen is not at 100% efficiency. Yesterday there was a shortage of cigarettes.

Even officers have a grievance. The usual mess allowance paid to militia officers, out of which mess contributions and payment of a batman are provided, is not for the Sixth Division. Subalterns, out of 15/ a day, have to meet these expenses out of their pay. They think the allowance should be restored.

The troops will have their first route march next week – on the eleventh day of the camp!



A rare moment of leisure for a recruit.



Bayonet drill.

When we were mustered together in our battalions it was quite unnecessary to subject us to propaganda calculated to strengthen our willingness to fight or to fortify our resolve to go on with it to the end. That had all been done before in our childhood. Neither did we need to be told the importance of loyalty to our mates, our company or our battalion.

What the army had to teach us was primarily the expert use of the army's particular tools of trade and to coordinate our efforts on a grand scale. This took about a year.

Not as a Duty Only – Henry 'Jo'; Gullett (2/5 Bn)

Mud over Blood

The records show that Ian signed up for the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF) on 31 Oct 1939, at Sturt St South Melbourne. The following day he was taken on strength by the 2/7th Battalion (Bn), as VX170, Captain Green. 2/7th Bn was part of the mainly Victorian 17th Brigade (Bde).

All units were allocated a Unit Colour Patch (UCP). The grey border denoted the 2nd AIF and the 2/7th was allocated the colours of the 7th Battalion of WW1. These were worn at the top of each sleeve and on the right-hand side of the slouch hat's puggaree.



Ian's 2/7th Bn UCP AC

The troops of the 2/7th gave themselves the nickname "Mud over Blood", in reference to the brown over red of their UCP, and to the original 7th Battalion.

VX170 was Ian's Army Number – VX indicated he was a volunteer for the 2nd AIF from Victoria (The prefix indicated home State ie NX for NSW). Numbers were sequential, thus the first Victorian to volunteer – VX1 – was the later Field Marshall Blamey. Members of the 2nd AIF came to judge each other by the 'lowness' of their number – a low number was prized, particularly as the war progressed, while those with higher numbers became collectively known as 'deep thinkers'.

A family story suggests Ian was expecting to receive a much lower number than VX170 but it was 'stolen' by somebody with more influence. It's quite possible, but we'll never know.

Ian was the first person from Morwell to enlist. By the time he signed up, he was already endorsed by the CO 2/7 Bn, LtCol Theo Walker (VX32), and the Commander of 17th Brigade, Brig Stan Savige (VX13). Savige was originally from Morwell and had been a draper upon signing up for the (first) AIF during WW1. He must have known Arthur Green. He certainly knew Ian as he had commanded 10 Bde (which included 52 Bn) before the war.

For some time to come there would be a shortage of officers in the 2nd AIF, yet only half the officers who volunteered from Victorian Militia battalions were taken by 17 Brigade. This was because COs only offered appointments to a select proportion of volunteers, preferring to go short until they could select and qualify potential leaders from the fine material existing among other volunteers. Even in Jan 1940, 2/7th Bn had filled only 18 out of 34 officers' roles – many would be commissioned from the ranks in the coming 12 Months.

The majority of Militia Officers and NCO's who signed up to the AIF were required to surrender one rank. Most LtCol became Maj, most Sgt became Cpl etc. Significantly Ian, a newly promoted Captain just that month, retained his rank.

'Myrtle'

LtCol Theo Walker had been posted to the 'new' 2/7th Bn as Commanding Officer (CO) the previous week at Flemington while they took on recruits – that week he was joined by an Adjutant (Adjt) and a Second in Command (2IC). Ian 'marched in' to the Bn on 1 Nov; As Ian was to be a Company Commander, Walker was his direct boss.

Walker was 39, the youngest CO then in the AIF, and the only 17 Bde CO without WW1 service. He had been a Bank Manger with the State Savings Bank of Victoria; also commanding the Militia 24th and later 24/39th Bns. Recruits saw and heard LtCol Walker early on – and were not initially impressed. He was short, dapper, mild mannered and precisely, if quietly spoken with a high-pitched voice. They christened him 'Myrtle'; like most COs he was also referred to in the third person as 'The Old Man'. Ian could not have picked a better boss.

Many, including some senior officers doubted this quiet gentleman's ability to command an infantry battalion in wartime. 'Myrtle' was to prove them wrong, firstly by building one of the better disciplined Australian battalions.

The story goes that later in Palestine, Walker was called back to camp early from leave. It was dark and when a shadowy figure was challenged by the sentry he barked "The CO, Colonel Walker". The sentry replied – "Cut the bull, everybody knows Myrtle is on leave". The battalion quickly learned Myrtle was less than happy with his nickname. Once the 2/7th commenced operations, Myrtle became 'tops' as far as his diggers were concerned.



VX 32 LtCol T G Walker, CO 2/7th Bn with his E.D.

After Bardia and Tobruk, Walker was selected to attend Senior Officers' Tactical Course which may have led to his promotion to Brigadier, but he deferred this to continue as CO 2/7th Bn for the Greek campaign.

Accounts of the 2/7th in Greece and Crete include many descriptions of Walker's consistently sound leadership, despite the increasingly desperate situations they faced.

The nature of the CO's role makes one somewhat remote, yet diggers recall him visiting every section (there were at least 30) to exchange a few words of encouragement and trust the evening before they entered the desperate battle on Crete.

Under 'Myrtle's' leadership at the Battle of 42nd Street, 2/7th Bn conducted a fierce bayonet charge that forced the German invaders back more than a mile. The Adjutant forcibly stopped Myrtle from participating himself.

Later, as the unsuccessful defence of Crete finished, Walker was to step off an evacuation vessel at the last moment when he realized most of his 400 remaining men were to be left behind. He was captured but escaped for several days until retaken, then transferred to a series of prisoner-of-war camps in Greece and later Germany.

2/7th Bn recruits came from Mildura – Robinvale, Sale – Maffra, and from Melbourne metropolitan areas. There were dairy and wheat farmers, sheep hands, owners of stations, roustabouts and tar boys, salesmen, bank and insurance clerks, carpenters, drivers, blacksmiths, chefs and a hotel owner. Some were ex Militia, with varying levels of experience; many were ‘civvies’, straight off the street.

2/7th Bn was to be built into four rifle companies – ‘A’ to ‘D’ – under headquarters company (HQ Coy) and a Bn HQ, with a strength of around 900. Within HQ Coy were six specialist platoons (signals, pioneer, anti-aircraft, transport, administrative and mortars) to provide organic combat and service support to the rifle companies.

With 2/5th and 2/6th Bn, they formed 17th Brigade (17 Bde), the second brigade of the 6th Division (6 Div). By the end of the first week, 2/7th Bn had 10 Officers and 21 OR’s – the next week 13 Officers and 434 OR’s.

All the existing Army accommodation and facilities were still in use by the Militia, so the recruits commenced training at Melbourne Showgrounds before new camps became ready. On 3 Nov, advance parties of 16 and 17 Bdes were sent to the new camps to prepare them to receive drafts from training depots and recruiting centres.

‘Pucka’

Ian’s ability to organise, administer and ‘get things done’ was quickly recognised. He was appointed to lead the 2/7th Bn Advance Party of 3 other Officers, the RSM and 20 ORs to Puckapunyal in order to prepare the camp area for arrival of the Bn for what was to become five months of training. Ian was also appointed as Officer Commanding D Company (OC D Coy).

New huts were being built for the entire 6 Div. Pucka was to accommodate 17 Bde group infantry battalions plus artillery, engineers, transport and other units, with a strength of approximately 4,500 personnel. More were constructed for 16 (NSW) Bde at Ingleburn (Later known as Bardia Barracks), and for 18 Bde at Greta in the Hunter Valley. In the meantime, most troops simply lived and worked under canvas.

Ian’s team arrived at ‘Pucka’ in heavy rain on 3 Nov to find the camp ‘very muddy’. The site – poor, brown, heavily stoned with ‘buckshot gravel’ and sparsely grassed soil with stunted scrub and undernourished gum trees – was far from idyllic. The site was 11km from Seymour – too far for a quick run into town.



Pucka Huts and Giggle Suits - 1940

There were no sealed roads and water was drawn straight from the creek.

Pucka was still a construction site with 15 of the huts still occupied by civilian builders. The huts were unlined, unpainted corrugated iron sheeting, with lift up iron shutters (not windows); but at least they had wooden floors. Electric lighting was eventually connected weeks later.

They set to work preparing the camp for the arrival of 440 personnel later that week. Inspections were conducted and defects quickly found in camps so hurriedly built – to be fair – just 8 weeks after war's declaration.

A camp condition report on 3 Nov stated: *"Roads are unformed, electrical appliances are incomplete, mess tables have been condemned by the engineers, horse lines are not fixed, and there are no stables or harness rooms. Kitchens and meat houses are not flyproof or hygienic; orderly room staff use butter boxes as chairs and packing cases as tables and have made shelves with timber they found. Drainage is inefficient".*

Before the camps were ready, OC's had begun to form their units. Ian selected a nucleus of officers and NCO's, then prepared to receive large batches of recruits when the huts were ready, arranged areas for training activities and assembled enough equipment to enable the men to be fed and bedded. This period – making an entire army out of nothing was a busy, challenging time.

It seems Pucka only ever has extreme weather; too hot, too cold, too wet, too windy – it is never 'just right'. The late spring rain stopped and the sun returned – fine dust appeared shortly after. The dust got into and onto everything and became a way of life. Field equipment adopted its colour. It got into ears, eyes, food and one's brew⁴. It caused an irritation of the larynx still known as 'Pucka throat'. As the first batches of recruits arrived, carpenters and plumbers were still at work, and road graders were raising a haze of dust.

An example of how much had to be done is shown by the activities which occurred while training was ongoing:

4 Nov	Camp Drained
7 Nov	All ranks cleaning camp. NCO's (ex Militiamen) with the RSM for Drill and practice
13 Nov	Individual training commenced
14 Nov	Boots Issued
20 Nov	Sports ground selected, rifles, bayonets & slings issued.
21 Nov	First issue of working dress ('giggle suits'). Electric lights connected.
22 Nov	Webbing issued (WW1 pattern), first issue of uniform. Machine Guns drawn. (WW1 Lewis Guns)
29 Nov	Unit strength now 17 Offr & 686 ORs

As drafts arrived, Ian selected personnel he or his NCO's knew of, with some unknowns allocated randomly. Mates were usually allowed to remain together – it was far from a mindless allocation. Potential leaders were identified and gradually, acting corporals and sergeants were selected; army routine and ritual ceased to be a mystery, and elements of drill and musketry were learnt.

⁴ Tea

A cotton overall working dress and a crumpled hat of the same material were issued, troops quickly named it the "giggle suit" because it resembled uniforms of lunatic asylum inmates; next came the loose-fitting battle-dress—tunic, trousers and cloth gaiters. After three weeks "a straggly, nondescript body of men" started to develop into a "compact unit". Members chipped in to buy their own sewing machine so they could alter the uniforms to fit.

Pte Matthews observed: *"We got up at 0600 for reveille. We went on parade in pyjamas to answer our name at roll call. Then we dressed, had breakfast and were back on parade at 0800 for inspection and more drill. We had the old (WW1) webbing equipment with pouches, bayonet, haversack and big pack. When you were in full marching order it was quite a load. We used to do some of our work in full marching order. They worked us like hell.*

There was a great spirit. Everyone decided that this was a big team and we were going to do something together. They were a great crowd of fellows to be with and we got on like a family – we became great mates.

There were some very fine fellows there. The Company Commanders of B Company, Capt Bishop and Capt Green, were examples. Later on, Capt Bishop became a General. Capt Green was the one who eventually ended up with the Company. He was a fellow ... who in civilian life was a Manager with the National Bank. He was one of those blokes who had taken a great interest in the Militia and, through hard work had become an officer. If you wanted to go for promotion in the militia you had to put in an enormous amount of time. It was all done by examination. I had a lot of respect for fellows like Capt Green. They were great fellows who were very keen on all this military stuff".

The typical daily training routine, marked by Bugle calls, was:

0600	Reveille (and PT)
0750	Breakfast
0830	Coy Parade (Roll call followed by announcements)
0845	Bn Parade (Companies march in to combine the Unit)
0900	Sick Parade
0900 - 1230	Training (typically individual lessons and training followed by group training)
1245	Midday Meal
1400 - 1630	Training
1730	Evening Meal
1820	Duties Parade (those selected for kitchen duty, sentries, orderlies etc)
1830	Retreat
1845	Officers' Mess (The CO mandated officers' attendance – a de facto conference)
2130	First Post
2200	Last Post
2215	Lights Out

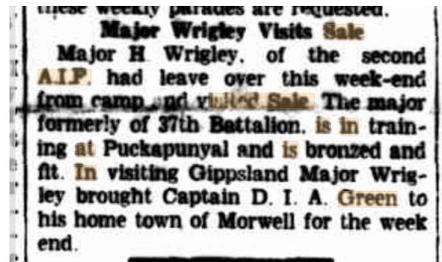
Every morning was a full battalion parade – 800 troops – on the parade ground where administration was performed; the other two battalions of 17 Bde also in the vicinity. At parade's end, each company would march off to their assignment for the day. 2/7th Bn would always march

to the 'Colonel Bogey' March⁵, (the diggers would sing their own carefully chosen words); each Bn marched to their own different tune.

The pace and intensity of early training was deliberately paced to build as stamina grew. In the 'bull ring' open training area there was bayonet training, map reading practice and war games, sometimes using blank ammunition. Each month, they would march to the Seymour Rifle Range for live shooting – through town, across the Goulburn River some 15km march away. They would usually remain overnight. At the time there was a stable with horses available for officers; Ian could ride, although it's likely he chose to march.

That said, the pace was sustainable. Visitors were allowed on weekends; weekend leave was allowed (if approved) – and regular train travel from Seymour to Melbourne was available.

Ian could visit Jean, now living with her parents in Beaconsfield Parade St Kilda while she studied Midwifery at the Women's Hospital.



Gippsland Times 20 Nov 1939

It was relatively easy to visit home – by train or by car. As many of Ian's comrades were from Gippsland this was relatively easy to arrange.

On the parade ground, in company or in barracks, Ian would be addressed as 'Sir' and saluted by his men and others – all salutes are returned, and it is typical to add a greeting. Saluting is mandatory; however some officers were saluted more willingly than others. Diggers knew most of their OC's in the third person as 'Skip' or 'The Skipper' – in the field there was typically less formality and 'Skipper' was commonly used; these days it's 'Boss'.

Warned for Embarkation

Since Hitler's invasion of Poland in Sep 1939 and the commencement of war with Germany, nothing of great consequence had occurred other than the initial deployment of British troops to France. Italy had not yet entered the war so unless the AIF was to remain in SE Asia there was little reason to think they were destined to fight anywhere else than in France.

On 28 Nov, Federal Cabinet finally decided 6 Div should go abroad when it had reached a suitable stage in training – expected to be early in 1940. Steps were planned to transfer the force to the Middle East – and for Ian, things now moved very quickly.

Many rumours circulated around 2/7th Bn as to where their eventual destination might be. In Nov 39 they could have picked from Singapore, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Palestine or the UK. Rumours peaked on 8 Dec when Ian and SGT W Shaw were sent on one week's Pre-Embarkation leave.

⁵ Later made famous by the movie "Bridge on the River Kwai"

Ian was nominated for his next role after a request from 6 Div to 16 & 17 Bdes on 3 Dec 1939, with a requirement for officers to attend weapons courses overseas – one company commander per Bn:

4. In making the selection, it should be remembered that the personnel chosen will be, as it were, the adv party of the 2nd A.I.F. in addition, therefore, to choosing offrs and N.C.Os who have the ability to impart the instructions they receive to their units at a later date, their personal characteristics must be above reproach.

Ian had clearly earned the confidence of Myrtle; he was to be separated from the Bn for 4 Months.

Their destination would not be disclosed until they were at sea, and they were to embark in under two weeks; Ian would have to wrap up training, hand over to another OC, draw kit and take a weeks' leave before embarkation.

Whilst their destination was kept secret, it is said there were crates of equipment seen being prepared for the voyage which were clearly marked 'AIF Base area – Port Said'.

Meanwhile, plans were made to send the first full troop convoy to the Middle East. 16 (NSW) Bde, totalling 6,600 men was expected to leave Sydney mid Jan, followed by 17 Bde in Apr. At the time Ian left, 2/7th Bn was 842 strong. Training was to continue at Pucka in his absence with increasing tempo until 2/7th Bn embarked for the Middle East on 15 Apr 40.



Ian took pre embarkation leave from 8 – 15 Dec 1939; presumably he made a beeline for Morwell – he had snatched a few weekends there since Oct. There are several portraits of Ian in his AIF uniform that were most likely taken by Arthur at this time. Possibly this photo of Ian farewelling one of Uncle Gus's hunting dogs was also taken during this period.

Ian is also likely to have also spent time in Melbourne, where he could spend time with the majority of his family, as well as with Jean. Ella's family lived in Horsham – a visit would have involved two full days' return trip. Ella may have visited Melbourne or Morwell instead.

After the steady life he had established, Ian's life had become a whirlwind of changes.

Just three months into WW2, Ian had left his civilian life, completed a course in Sydney, been promoted, joined the AIF, established the facilities and personnel of his part of the 2/7th Bn, and was now, at less than 2 weeks' notice about to be shipped overseas, destination unknown, to an unknown future. One suspects the brief period before departure continued this hectic pattern for Ian.

For one, family and friends had to be farewelled; there was also the issue of his relationship with Jean. Ian had by now been in this relationship coming up on three years. At the time, a couple

who had been courting for so long would have married, however it seems that the Catholic – Protestant divide had forced something of a stalemate for their relationship that neither of them was able to overcome. Nevertheless the strength of their feelings for each other are obvious.

The Author believes Ian and Jean agreed to marry; a proposal may have been made during Ian's last hectic week in Melbourne. This was not announced and appears it was not known by the Green family. If Kit and/or Arthur were aware of this, they told nobody.

For Ian, dealing with the family would have to wait until after the war. On the other hand, as we will see, members of the O'Halloran family shared their secret.

Voyage

To travel is one of the soldier's chief compensations for a life that has more than its share of danger, discomfort, separation of lovers, and subjection to authority. To Australians the opportunity of seeing the world has a special appeal because they live in comparative isolation yet are possessed by exceptional curiosity about the world's affairs, those of their own country seeming insufficiently varied and picturesque to satisfy their restless minds. To successive contingents of them, Palestine, and in particular Jerusalem with its cosmopolitan people and its sacred antiquities, and even Tel Aviv, were objects of intense interest.

'To the Middle East' Volume 1 – Gavin Long

Ian overnighted in Melbourne and early morning Fri 15 Dec, assembled with others at the Showgrounds and boarded a train. They marched through Melbourne. Re boarding, they travelled to Port Melbourne. The Second AIF Advance Party of 50 Officers and 60 SNCOs and ORs sailed on RMS *Strathallan* at 1100, bound for Palestine. They joined a similar party of 25 Offr and 88 NCO & ORs from New Zealand. The Advance Party was to reconnoitre training areas, arrange administration and prepare for the reception of the remainder of the force when it arrived.

Ian must have had very mixed feelings – leaving his family and his fiancée behind. The excitement and anticipation of leaving for exotic overseas destinations was tempered with thoughts as to when, whether and under what circumstances he would see Australia again; what would the future hold?



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

000304/01

RMS Strathallan leaving Port Melbourne 15 Dec 1939

This well-known photograph is of *RMS Strathallan* as it carried Ian on his journey to war through Port Phillip Bay on that day. Perhaps Jean was watching from her parents' home close by on Beaconsfield Parade.

Ship Life

Only 18 months old, P&O's passenger liner RMS *Strathallan* was yet to be requisitioned as a troopship; she was in pre-war condition and operated this voyage more or less along civilian lines. Originally P&O white, *Strathallan* had been painted a dull grey and was blacked out at night due to concerns that U-Boats or German raider ships (Cargo ships specifically converted to carry armaments under disguise) might intercept shipping.

Strathallan carried many civilian passengers on this trip. She was comfortable and officers were allocated first class cabins, shared by two.



First Class 2 Berth Cabin P&O Stratheden (sister ship)

She was initially escorted by HMAS *Adelaide*, a light cruiser. *Adelaide* travelled to and fro around *Strathallan* like a hunting hound; usually ahead to clear the path ahead of threats.

They made a fast trip down the Bay and were through Port Phillip Heads by 1500, turning towards the setting sun to commence their journey west.

Officers had the use of First-Class dining rooms and lounges; which doubled as a mess. They could use the music room, library, barber shop and deck games. Compared with what troopships become later in the war, *Strathallan* was a paradise. On the way to *Adelaide* there was no work programmed; all aboard were 'tourists'.

The following afternoon (16 Dec), they docked in *Adelaide* with the opportunity for short shore leave; they left the next day. Once leaving *Adelaide*, the daily routine commenced, but it remained relatively light:

0930 – 1000	Rifle Training and Anti Gas Drills
1000 – 1015	Morning Tea (Sick Parade #1 Concurrent)
1015 – 1100	Physical & Recreation Training
1130 – 1230	Individual Training
1230 – 1330	Lunch
1430 – 1530	Individual Training
1700	Sick Parade #2
	Dinner
	Dinner (Officers)
	Lights Out

Captain Ian Green, son of Mr and Mrs A. Green, of Morwell, sailed last week, with other officers of the Second A.I.F., for parts unknown.

Morwell Advertiser 21 Dec 39

The facilities and deck games on *Strathallan* assisted the PT programme, however much of the activity consisted of boxing and endless laps of the decks, up and down stairs, either in PT kit or with webbing and rifle – formal PT sessions are not mentioned so Ian likely continued his fitness programme either alone or with a few friends. There were many lifeboat and emergency drills conducted during the voyage.

The passengers provided raider lookouts in 2 hour shifts every night between 1800 – 0600 (1 Offr & 1 NCO on the bridge and a similar pair aft). Even though German raiders did not appear in Indian Ocean waters for another 5 months, memories of WW1 raiders remained clear. The ship was completely blacked out, with extreme care to be taken to prevent any light being seen. Striking matches or smoking on deck during darkness was prohibited.

The daily pace was relaxed and on occasions there was plenty of time for reading, discussions, or quiet contemplation, with the background noise, rattles and movement of the ship. Most passengers suffered from initial seasickness but improved as the voyage continued and they found their 'sea legs'. Personnel could wear PT kit when not working; they were warned to cover 'stomach & loins' when sunbaking.



There were several other administrative matters attended to on board as a result of their hasty departure. Inoculations and vaccinations commenced from 19 Dec for all ranks – there were several carried out during the voyage.

Identification Discs were Issued to all ranks. If a soldier was KIA the octagonal disc would remain with the body (placed in the mouth) for identification should the body be exhumed. The circular disc was removed and later used to identify the belongings of the soldier.

They were sardonically called "dead meat tickets".

They were secured around the neck by cotton tape, a leather thong, or a metal chain. Infantry usually replaced the chain, which rattled, with quiet tape or a thong.

After the first full week at sea, Christmas was a highlight and no doubt the first of its type for most. There were no parades or training on Christmas Day, and church services for all denominations were held mid-morning. All ranks were provided a hamper provided by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne's Comforts Fund.

Officers, SNCO's and OR's messed separately, however there is a long-standing tradition that on Christmas Day, officers and SNCOs serve the OR's Christmas Dinner. The officers initially went aft and joined the NCOs for a drink, prior to serving. Celebrations continued during the afternoon, and at least one of the officers was noted as having 'had too good a time'.

As they travelled North, the weather warmed and became humid. In line with cruise ship tradition, a 'Crossing of the Line (equator)' ceremony was held under the command of King Neptune on Boxing Day.

The voyage has been described as 'pleasant'. Their first overseas port of call was Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) on 27 Dec. All going ashore wore khaki shirts, shorts, long socks & Felt Hats. Strathallan arrived mid-afternoon and there was enough time to go ashore for some sightseeing that afternoon, maybe on a rickshaw and perhaps a meal, before the expected departure later that evening. Ian may have had time to purchase clothes or souvenirs. His first overseas visit to an exotic tropical foreign land and its people would leave a deep impression.

'Capt DIA Greene' (sic) was appointed Aft Raider lookout duty 2400-0200 that evening. In the event, Strathallan did not depart until 0230, so his duty was deferred until the following night.

There was a relatively short 2 day 'hop' to Bombay (Mumbai) India, where they arrived at first light 30 Dec. Once again there was the opportunity to go ashore for some sightseeing and perhaps a meal and a cold drink. Bombay was pleasant, being mild and not so humid this time of the year.

After Bombay they spent New Year's Eve at sea. Ian was allocated as Duty Officer for New Years' day 1940; a task requiring he and those with him to be well presented and attentive, with a number of scheduled and ad hoc tasks and inspections to perform on board over a 24-hour period. If he'd had a late night, he would have suffered from it. Drawing duty on such a day is something of a short straw; this may have been a random or he may have earned the privilege the week prior for some form of misdemeanour.

On 2 Jan, a group portrait of the Advance Party was taken and the following day Ian was admitted to the ship's hospital with German Measles (Rubella) – he remained here until the 6th and, suffering a fever, swollen glands and rashes, spent a few uncomfortable days in the warm weather.

Ian was scheduled to be on raider lookout, this time on the bridge from 0200 – 0400. That day (4 Jan) they stopped in Aden long enough for shore leave. Presumably, Ian remained aboard. The next 3 days they transited the Red Sea, Gulf of Suez and then the Suez Canal. For once, there would be something to see from the ship.

They arrived in Port Said, disembarking on the morning of 8 Jan 1940. All were armed and carried ammunition.

Strathallan departed for the UK via the Mediterranean Sea. On her return to the UK, *Strathallan* was formally requisitioned by the British Ministry of War Transport as a troopship; she was fitted with deck armament and fitted out to carry large numbers of troops in spartan conditions – she completed many voyages including visits to the USA after Japan's entry into the war.

In Nov 1942 she participated in Operation Torch, the US landings in North Africa. On 21 Dec 1942, in bright moonlight and fine weather shortly after passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, *Strathallan* was torpedoed by U-562 about 40 miles north of Oran, she was abandoned and placed under tow but sank the next day. Only six crew members, five nurses and five troops were lost.

AT SEA. 1940-01-2. SECOND AIF ADVANCE PARTY ABOARD STRATHALLAN.
(LEFT TO RIGHT)

BACK ROW (STANDING): SGT B. D. ROCHE 6 DIV ASC; SSGT W SMART O/S BASE; SSGT B E COOKE O/S BASE; SGT G F HOLROYD 6 DIV ASC; T/SGT F S ALLAN 6 DIV ARTY; T/SGT R F WILKINS 6 DIV ARTY; SGT J B ROBERTS 6 DIV SIGS;

2nd BACK ROW (STANDING): PTE R A FAULKNER OS BASE; SGT A J BICKELL 6 DIV ARTY; T/SGT G D BROWNE 6 DIV ARTY; SGT A M MALCOLM 6 DIV ASC; LT J DENT 6 DIV RECON REGT; T/SGT C W C DOSSITER 6 DIV ENGR; SGT R A MATTHEWS 16 BDE; PTE D J STRAIN 6 DIV HQ; SGT E A LEWIS 17 BDE; SGT N MCLEOD 6 DIV RECON REGT; CPL D J ARBUTHNOT 6 DIV ASC; SGT V DAWS 18 BDE; SGT L N TRIBOLET 6 DIV SIGS; CPL T A DIBDEN 17 BDE; S/SGT W H HAIGH O/S BASE; SGT W C L SHAW 17 BDE.

3rd BACK ROW (STANDING): SGT H C LANGMAN BDE; PTE V C J WHITHAM O/S BASE; PTE C J J BAKER O/S BASE; LT R MADDERN; SGT P R COHEN BDE; **CAPT D I A GREEN** 17 BDE; CAPT C L SIMPSON BDE; CAPT M C D LITTLE BDE; CAPT H H DEAN BDE; PTE C ROSE O/S BASE; PTE B DAVIS 6 DIV HQ; PTE V G THOMAS O/S BASE; SGT D J A FOOTE RECON REGT; S/SGT J S MEYRS O/S BASE; S/SGT B J T STONE O/S BASE; WO2 J F MCLEAN O/S BASE.

4th BACK ROW (STANDING/SITTING): PTE L CLAYTON 6 DIV HQ; MR H K MACLEAN RED CROSS; LT C W W PERRY 6 DIV ASC; LT K W LAWRENCE 6 DIV ASC; LT F P WILSON 18 BDE; CAPT W B GRIFFITHS 17 BDE; CAPT W R G HISCOCK 6 DIV ARTY; LT D H WADE 6 DIV ARTY; CAPT V H VINCENT BDE; LT T C C BEDELLS BDE; CAPT I J HOOKER SIGS; LT B F A BROWN SIGS; LT R E COURT BDE; SGT R S B COOK BDE; PTE R S MACNAMARA O/S BASE; T/BDR N J ACKLAND 6 DIV ARTY; T/CPL L W FUTCHER ENGRS; SGT M F ROBINSON; T/SGT E J JOHNSTONE ENGRS.

5th BACK ROW (SITTING): CAPT A E MCCAUSLAND O/S BASE; CAPT G E H BLEBY 6 DIV ARTY; CAPT H W M NELSON 6 DIV ARTY; CAPT V H N GIBBONS 6 DIV ARTY; CAPT A H TINLEY O/S BASE; CAPT J R DALE O/S BASE; CAPT T H NADEBAUM 6 DIV SIGS; CAPT T E WILLIAMS RECON REGT

6th BACK ROW (3rd FROM FRONT) (SITTING): MAJ (MAJ) F W MACLEAN 6 DIV ASC; MAJ R G HUTCHINSON RECON REGT; LTCOL C A STINSON O/S BASE; LTCOL E O MILNE O/S BASE; COL H C DISHER O/S BASE; BRIG B M MORRIS O/S BASE; COL G A VASEY 6 DIV HQ; LTCOL J MANN O/S BASE; LTCOL G N MOORE O/S BASE; MAJ R G H IRVING 6 DIV HQ.

2nd ROW FROM FRONT (SITTING): SGT F N C RENDALL 6 DIV ASC; LT S J GREVILLE 6 DIV SIGS; LT J G WILSON 6 DIV ENGRS; LT P R GILMOUR 6 DIV ENGRS; CAPT J MILLER 16 BDE; LT O B MORIARTY 16 BDE; LT N P W FARRELL 16 BDE; LT N P MCQUILKIN 6 DIV ARTY; LT E W CRUTE 6 DIV ARTY; LT H C REYMOND RECON REGT; LT G H PRINCE 16 BDE; LT W B CAIDWELL 16 BDE; CPL G B F BARNFIELD O/S BASE.

FRONT ROW (SITTING): T/SGT F R CHAMBERLAIN 6 DIV ARTY; PTE F W MAHER HQ O/S BASE; SGT H K H GOODWIN 18 BDE; SGT A J MAYGER 18 BDE; S/SGT A J ANGUS O/S BASE; PTE E C ABBOTT 6 DIV HQ; PTE L G E JONES O/S BASE; SGT G M MILLS 6 DIV RECON REGT; T/SGT K R STEWART 6 DIV ARTY; SGT D J KEARNEY 6 DIV SIGS; SGT F C TAYLOR 6 DIV RECON REGT; SGT R M CASPERSON 6 DIV SIGS.

ABSENT: S/SGT J D AGAR O/S BASE; T/SGT F G PEARSON 6 DIV ENGRS; SGT J L PHILLIPS; 6 DIV ASC; SGT R H WOOD 17 BDE.

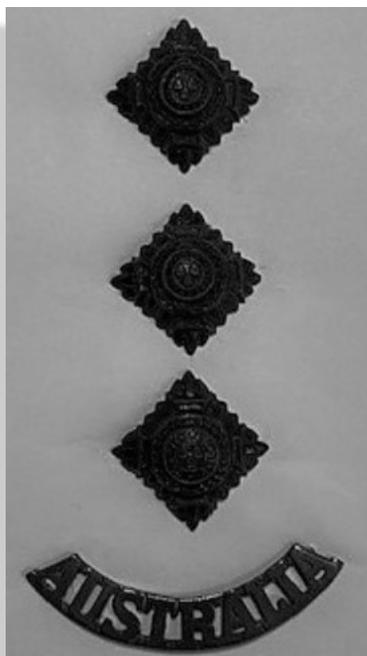


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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6

Learning and Teaching



WD

ADV 6 AUS DIV

GENERAL STAFF INSTRUCTION NO 1 .

SECURITY MEASURES.

Introductory.

1. (a) It is important to realize that until a very few weeks ago Palestine was in a state of rebellion; although that is no longer the case, certain precautions must be taken until the population has had time to resume a more normal life.
- (b) It must be realised also that the Arab has different standards of honesty to ours; and the thieving to which he is prone will be encouraged if the temptation to thieve is placed in his way.
- (c) The new-comer in any country is "easy meat", consequently all ranks must understand their responsibility in the matter and see that the following "Security Measures" are constantly maintained. Any relaxation inevitably will lead to trouble, both for the individual and for the commander of whatever rank.
- (d) In justification of the following instructions it may be remarked that over 200 British soldiers have been killed in Palestine with rounds fired from rifles collected by the Arab during and since the last War; in addition over 4000 rifles have been taken from the inhabitants during the recent rebellion, and there is a very marked desire to replace them. This replacement must not be at our expense.

Safe Guarding Arms and Ammunition.

2. (a) Each individual officer and soldier is personally responsible for the safeguarding of such arms and ammunition, government or private, as may be issued to him, placed in his charge or belonging to him.

Learning & Teaching – Palestine

The Australians disembarked from Strathallan armed, although the war had not yet reached the Middle East. In this so-called peaceful land, orders required the utmost care to be taken to ensure the security of personal weapons, ammunition and equipment – otherwise they disappeared.

Even then the Middle East was a dangerous place. The 1936–39 Arab revolt in Palestine was a nationalist uprising by Palestinian Arabs against British administration of the Palestine Mandate; they demanded Arab independence and an end to Jewish immigration and associated land purchases with the goal to establish a 'Jewish National Home'.

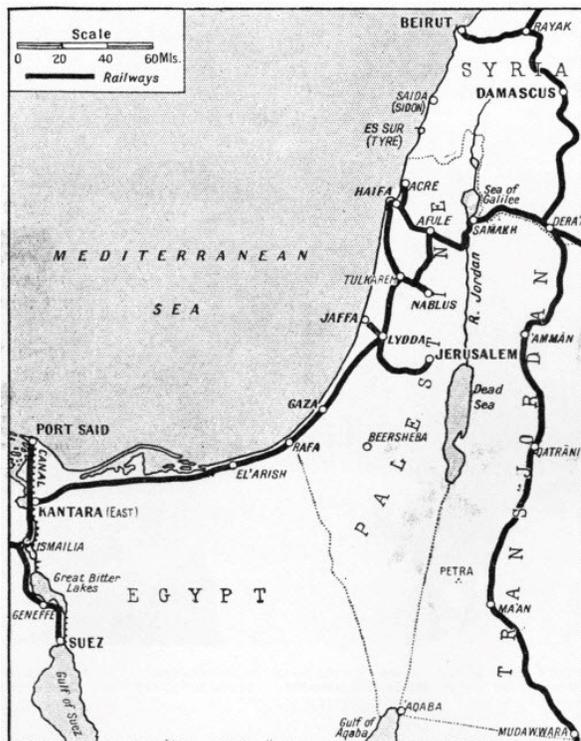
There was a general strike in 1936 followed by a violent revolt. The strike was defeated by the British using political concessions, international diplomacy and threats of martial law. From late 1937 the revolt was a violent resistance movement that targeted British forces. This was brutally suppressed by the British Army and the Palestine Police Force using measures intended to intimidate the Arab population and undermine popular support.

According to official British figures, more than 2,000 Arabs were killed in combat, 108 were hanged and 961 died from "gang and terrorist activities".

The Arab revolt was unsuccessful and Palestinian and Jewish activities became less intense during WW2. Post war, the British Mandate gave support to Zionist militias like Haganah, and eventually the state of Israel was born in 1948.

Even though Palestine was thus far unaffected by WW2, no less than 23 British infantry Bns were already in the Middle East. By the end of Sep 1939, leaders of both Arab and Jewish communities had pledged loyalty to the common cause, and terrorist incidents had virtually ceased.

There was much to do in Palestine, and little time. In the eyes of the AIF, The British Army were masters of a trade they were busily trying to master; they set the standard for professional and technical knowledge.



Rail Map Egypt/Palestine 1940

Batches of officers and men from every AIF unit completed courses at British Army schools – weapons training school at Bir Salim, Bren Carrier course at Sarafand, recruit training depot and cipher course in Jerusalem. With others from 16 & 17 Bdes, Ian disembarked *Strathallan* to board the costal train from Kantara East leaving 0300 via Gaza to Lydda (which adjoins Ramla) arriving 1020. There were vehicles awaiting their arrival for the 5km trip to Bir Salim.

They immediately noticed gum trees; eucalypts had been introduced to Palestine some 60 years previously and were plentiful in the area.

You won't find this place today; Bir Salim was a Palestinian Arab village in the Ramle Subdistrict of Mandatory Palestine. .

It was depopulated and subsequently destroyed by the Israelis during the 1947–48 Civil War

Bir Salim - MEWTS

With other officers and NCO's, Ian attended the 'Long Course' at Middle East Weapons Training School (MEWTS); located at Bir Salim, West of Ramla and 15km from Tel Aviv. The 4-week course commenced that afternoon, 8 Jan and they arrived ready to start on time.

In January the weather is mild to cool, and it can rain up to several days at a stretch followed by long periods of fine, clear weather.

For an army, weapon handling proficiency is the critical skill around which all others were built.

Most AIF units so far had trained with WW1 vintage weapons, however new modern weapons were becoming available for issue in quantity. It was these new weapons – the Bren Light Machine

Gun (LMG), the Boys Anti-Tank Rifle and the 2-inch Mortar – which Ian and his colleagues would learn from scratch, then master. The ‘Boys’ quickly became known as ‘Charlie the Bastard’ as it was heavy (front heavy in particular), awkward to carry and kicked hard when fired. They were encouraged to forget what they already knew, then re taught the .303 SMLE Rifle, bayonet fighting and the Webley .455 revolver. Despite the Bren having an effective range of 1.7km, armies of the Empire remained obsessed with ‘cold steel’ – bayonets.

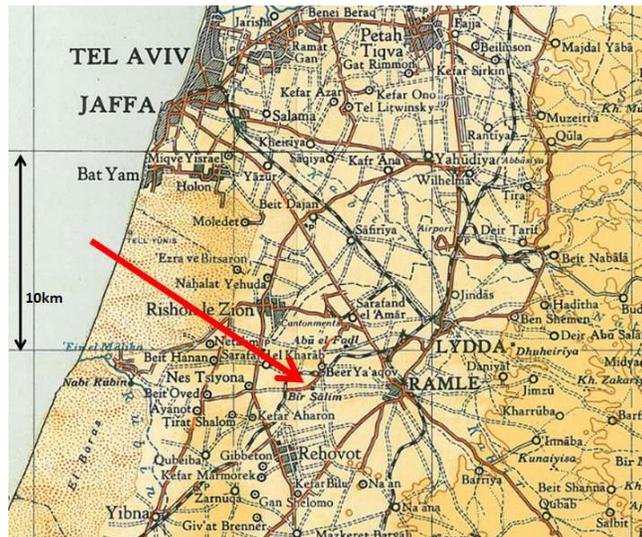
They would learn all that was needed to know to zero, load, aim, fire, deal with faults, strip, assemble, clean and reassemble each weapon, day and night. For crew served weapons they learned all roles. As company commanders they learned to site the weapons and coordinate their operational use, combining and overlaying their characteristics for maximum effect under a wide variety of circumstances.

As trainers they learned and practiced teaching these skills, then planned and conducted ‘live’ range and field firing practices in order to make their use instinctive for individuals, sections, sub units then the whole Battalion. These courses demanded time and effort yet were interesting and rewarding.

One aspect has not changed; that of looking around to see one’s course mates standing alone, talking to trees. They are practicing the presentation and delivery prior to their lessons being assessed.

MEWTS was previously a farming orphanage of white walled buildings with red tile roofs. The area was surrounded by gum trees and there were orange plantations nearby – oranges were plentiful in Palestine.

From the outside it was attractive, with pleasant views, however conditions were cramped and furniture was in short supply. The course of about 60 was divided into squads of 8, a mix of officers and NCOs, from all Arms Corps; Australians, British, Rhodesians, New Zealanders, and others.



Bir Salim, Palestine

All instructors were subject matter experts, oozed professionalism and were exemplar teachers. There are stories the British were disliked by Australians and while this was true for some; far more earned lasting respect and even admiration; they sure knew how to run an army. The respect was usually reciprocated. Quite an introduction to the Australians.

Lessons commenced early, with a period 0715-0800 before breakfast, then 0900-1300 and 1400-1500. There was time for individual PT in the late afternoon, plus time for the required revision and study. The officers’ mess allowed the opportunity for socialization over a cool drink after

study was complete, however the days were full and the pace frenetic. Plenty of new and interesting friends were made, and some weekend leave to Jaffa and Tel Aviv was available.

There was a mid-course practical exam and a written exam at the end of the course – all students received a grade; this grade, with a course report inevitably made its way back to the ‘Old Man’ and most wanted to do very well. At night the rooms were a blaze of light.

We don’t know what Ian’s grade was; the course finished 4 Feb, Ian is noted as ‘passed’ and he moved to his next attachment, via Jerusalem.

Jericho – 2nd Queen’s



Ian likely swapped this for ‘Australia’ shoulder titles AC

The AIF immediately set out to establish firm relationships with British units in the area – so AIF officers and SNCO’s were attached to these units in order to observe and participate in the business of instruction, training and field exercises.

From 5 – 21 Feb, Ian was attached to 2nd Battalion, The Queen’s Royal Regiment (West Surrey). Completing their first year in Palestine, 2nd Queen’s had arrived in Jericho in Jan.

Jericho Camp was 700 feet below sea level and 50km from Jerusalem in ‘a delightful climate and surroundings’.

2nd Queen’s (like most British units in Palestine; a regular unit) were well advanced in the process of adapting for war after a year engaged in anti-terrorist operations – a completely different role to previous.

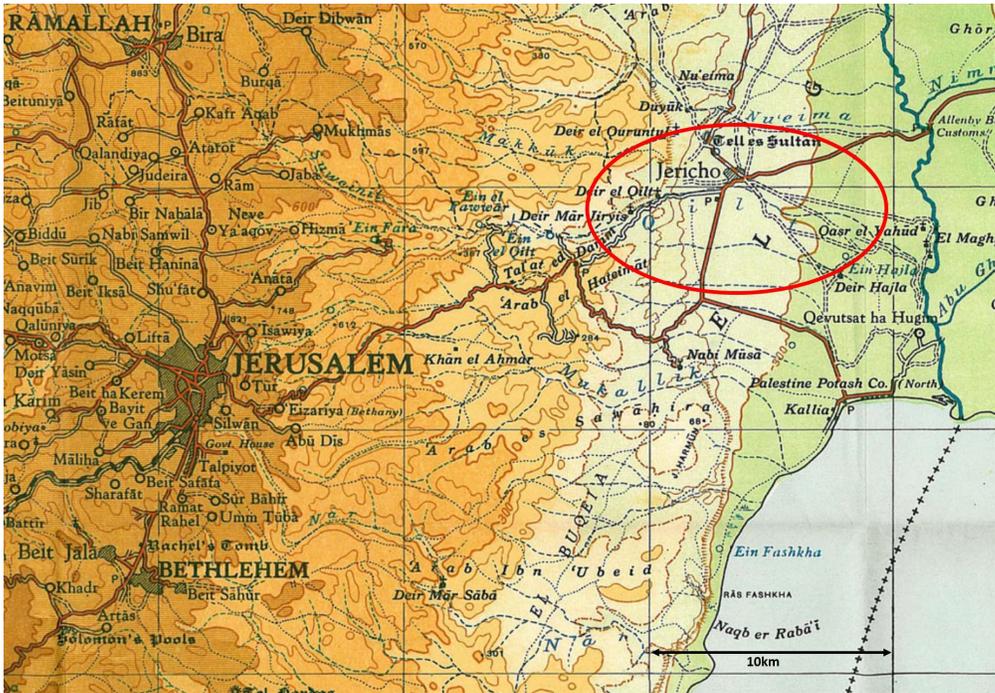
They were expanding, re organising, re equipping and re training.



2nd Queen’s Jericho Camp

The rhythm and content of training was very similar to what Ian could expect to be conducting when the 2/7th caught up, and as 2nd Queen’s were well below strength in Officers at the time, Ian would be welcomed and fully employed. Newly qualified at MEWTS, Ian would have planned, conducted and overseen weapons and other training activities, including range shoots and live field firing exercises. He would also observe and learn all aspects of an Infantry Battalion administering and training for operations in the field.

He must have enjoyed a swim in the Dead Sea during this time; it was only 10km from camp.



While Ian was in Jericho, the 2nd AIF's first troop convoy had arrived at Kantara on 13 Feb. 16 Bde disembarked and established itself at Julis. Ian's next attachment was there with the 2/2nd Bn.

Julis – 2/2 Bn

As planned, 16 Bde (including 2/1, 2/2, 2/3 and 2/4 Bns) had left Australia mid-Jan; Ian's 17 Bde was not to sail until Apr. Ian was attached to 2/2 Bn for 2 Months until 29 Apr.

16 Bde was from NSW. 2/2nd Bn was raised in Sydney as part of the Bde and trained at the newly opened Ingleburn Camp. Many of its members had come from Northern NSW; particularly the northern rivers.



2/2 Bn Colour Patch



Argus 23 Feb 1940

An excerpt of Training Instruction No 1 at the time states: "The principal objective will be to make all ranks fit and hard after sea passage in readiness for more intensive training". "Training programmes will therefore include physical training, drill, route marches and march discipline, and general work in the camp area. The length of route marches will be progressively increased".



Julis

Ian arrived with Sgt Tom Dibdin of 2/5th Bn, who had also completed MEWTS (Dibdin ended the war as a Maj). The following week, a 'new' issue of 17 X Bren Guns, 6 X Boys A/Tk Rifles and 4 X 2in mortars arrived at the Bn. These were issued across the Bde as modernisation took effect.

The following day, Bren training was 'in full swing' Below is an excerpt of the training program for the following week – there is much Bren, Rifle and bayonet training in progress so Ian was busy 'training the trainers' and overseeing progress. This is likely Ian's work.

Live firing ranges were also conducted during this week.

APPENDIX "B"

SYNOPSIS OF TRAINING

DATE	A COY	B COY	C COY	D COY	H.Q. COY
11 Mar.	0900-1200 Pl. in Att. 202236. 1315-1415 Bren Les 122. Camp Area. Bayonet Tg. do.	0900-1200 Pl. Defence. Digging & Firing 198231. 15-1415 Bren Les. 122. Camp Area. Indication) " " Recognition) " "	0900-1200 Miniature Range 201230. 1315-1615 Bren Les. 122. Camp Area. Indication) " " Recognition) " "	0900-1200 Pl. in Att. 201230. 1315-1615 Bren Les 122. Camp Area. J.D. " " "	Duty Coy Duty Coy
12 Mar.	Duty Coy. Duty Coy.	0900-1200 Pl. in Attack Scheme iii. 202233. 1315-1415 Bren Les 3. Camp Area. A.A. do. R.F.P. Les 4 do.	0900-1200 Pl. in Defence. Dgs. & Wrg. 199234. 1315-1415 Bren Les 3. Camp Area. do. A.A. do.	0900-1200 Min. Range 201230. 1315-1615 Bren Les 3. Camp Area. do. A.A. do.	Duty Coy See Appen
13 Mar.	0900-1200 Min. Range 201230. 1315-1615 Bren Les 3. Camp Area. J.D. do. Bren Les 4 do.	Duty Coy.	0900-1200 Pl. Att. Sch. 3. 20235. 1315-1415 Bren Les 4. Camp Area. Individual do. Concealment do.	0900-1200 Pl. Defence. Dgs. & Wrg. 199234. 1315-1615 Bren Les 3. Camp Area. do. Aiming off for Wind do.	See Appen
14 Mar.	ADMINISTRATIVE		ADMINISTRATIVE		
15 Mar.	0900-1200 Pl. in Att. Scheme iii. 202242. 1315-1615 Bren Les Cont. rol Orders Bren Strppg. Camp. Ar. do. A.A. do. D.A.G. Elem. Drill do.	0900-1200 Min. Range 201230. 1315-1615 Bren Les. 5. Camp Area. do. do. D.A.G. Elem. Drill do.	Duty Coy	0900-1200 Pl. in Att. Sch. ii. 211228. 1315-1615 Bren Recap. Camp Area. Fire Cont. orders do. D.A.G. Elem. Drill do.	See Appen
16 Mar.	0900-1200 Pl. in Def. Dgs. & Wrg. 198242. 1315-1615 Br. Elem. Hndlg. Camp Area. D.A.G. Elem. Dr. do. Bren Strppg. do.	0900-1200 Pl. Att. Sch. 4. 198242. 1315-1615 Bayonet Camp Area. Fire Cont. Orders do. J.D. do.	0900-1200 Bren Recap. Camp Area. Bayonet do. D.A.G. El. Drill do.	Duty Coy Duty Coy	See Appen

Easter was early – Good Friday being 22 Mar – with the Bn running a Sunday program. Leave to parts of the 'Holy Land' at this time would be well sought after.

While he was at 2/2 Bn, Ian 'pulled' a few Extra Regimental Duties – he was a member of no less than three courts of enquiry, for two vehicle accidents and a personal injury. A Court of Enquiry

would seek to identify the cause of an incident so that appropriate administrative action could be taken, as well as any changes made to training or procedure. They are rarely exciting and require a careful, painstaking and responsible approach to be taken.

The requirement to allow a force in training to enjoy regular leave was recognised very early on. As a result, almost all Australians in Palestine were able to visit Jerusalem (a 4 day leave pass) or Tel Aviv (a day trip). A regular bus schedule was implemented as well as approved accommodation made available for all.



Gippsland Times 14 Mar 40

Concurrently, 2/2 Bn continued with other training. The Bn had a route march on 2 Apr, notable for drizzling rain and the resultant mud. Through Apr there was a 4-day defense exercise followed shortly after by another 5-day exercise in the Hebron Hills. Ian supervised teams in the preparation of field works ('digging in') and erection of barbed wire for the defensive position.

Around this time the news came through that Germany had invaded Norway. This caused many conversations and the general consensus was that there would soon be a move coming soon to either England or France.

Late in the month was Anzac Day, followed by a 16 Bde Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT). A Dawn Service was held at Gaza Cemetery, attended by 500 men of all ranks. The Bde TEWT took up most of the day, comprising tactical problems for commanders at Platoon, Company, and Battalion Level. TEWTs were used to practice officers in assessing a situation, along with an allocated piece of ground and coming up with a tactical solution, resulting in the creation and presentation of an outline plan – essentially a skeleton set of orders. Separate TEWTs would practice planning for differing phases of war; Advance, Attack, Defense and Withdrawal.

A situation brief was issued and time allocated for individuals to inspect maps, conduct a reconnaissance and review the situation. Officers prepared a precis of a solution plus a marked map, presented this solution in front of their peers, dealt with questions and then critiqued each other's solutions. The problem was always hard, the ground usually difficult and time, as always, was short. But the job of assessing situations, coming up with sound tactical solutions and communicating them, under time pressure, is the core of being a military leader. TEWTs aimed to facilitate learning from superiors and peers.

At least nobody was shooting at you and because they were 'Without Troops', diggers' time, patience and respect was not wasted! There may have been an officers' mess function with other officers from the Bde that evening; that would have been appropriate as Ian was leaving 2/2 Bn, and going to 2/1 Bn, also from 16 Bde.

As 2/1 Bn was also at Julis, Ian did not have far to go. On 1 May he simply crossed a track from 2/2's home – Goddard Lines, into 2/1's home – Monash Lines.

Julis – 2/1 Bn

2/1 Bn was also raised in Sydney as part of the NSW 16 Bde and trained at Ingleburn Camp. It consisted of some 75% of its personnel from Sydney and the remainder from country NSW.



2/1 Bn Colour Patch

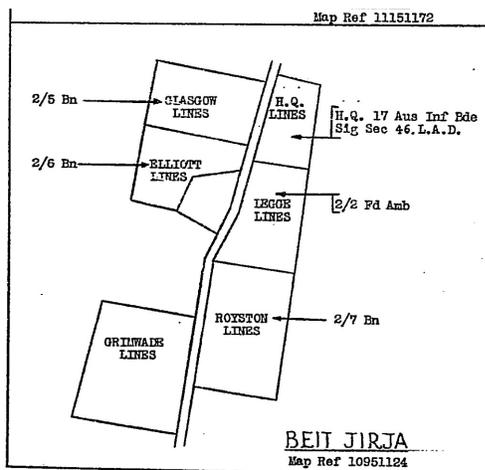
Ian's work consolidating his skills as a trainer was almost complete. The 2/7th had departed Melbourne on 15 Apr and were in transit to Palestine to join 6 Div.

By May, all rain had stopped, and it had become noticeably warmer – the long hot Summer was arriving.

In Ian's first week with 2/1 Bn, they participated in a series of TEWTS run by 6 (UK) Div over a 4 day period in the area. The TEWTS likely covered each of the 4 different phases of war and were conducted completely outdoors. There were four frenetic 16 hour days of reviewing situations, analysing orders, reading maps, conducting reconnaissance, devising plans, siting weapons and localities for sub units and units, writing outline plans, marking map traces and, finally presenting outline plans in front of peers and superiors for their critique.

This may have been broken by a race meeting which was held at Beersheba (50 km to the East) on 4 May; where the 2/1 Bn Band played, and leave was available.

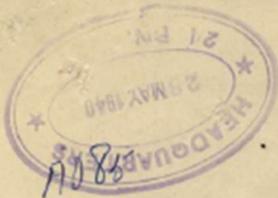
Ian's heart would have soared around this time, as orders were issued to 2/1 Bn for the preparation of Beit Jirja camp area for the imminent arrival of 17 Bde, and instructions for smaller parties to meet them upon disembarkation. 2/1 Bn provided several work parties to prepare the camp area and Ian was involved.



On 10 May, the German 'blitzkrieg' commenced as they invaded the low countries and France. After Prime Minister Chamberlain had resigned, Churchill formed his Government on this day.

Ian remained at Beit Jirja whilst some of his colleagues journeyed to Kantara to meet 17 Bde on their disembarkation in the Middle East. They departed south on 16 May.

In France only a week after the German invasion, General Guderian's panzers had already commenced their dash to the channel in an attempt to encircle and destroy the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) in France. The below circular (before the phrase 'spin' had been invented) was issued in Gaza in order to quell rumours and speculation.



5 73/40

6 AUS DIV

GENERAL STAFF CIRCULAR NO 2

SECRET

In view of the conflicting reports on the war the following is forwarded for information.

All officers should be informed of the contents of this circular and they in turn will pass the details on to other ranks as the opportunity arises.

The situation is grave but the dangers are seen. Reverses may be expected and the note should be confidence in the ultimate outcome rather than hope of immediate success.

In past wars the terrific initial effect of GERMAN hammer blows has failed.

In 1914 there were no substantial French or British forces available for the defence of BELGIUM but now a whole FRENCH army is defending a prepared line from ANTWERP to the MEUSE.

The high quality of our personnel gives great encouragement. In particular the R.A.F. are doing magnificent work.

There is evidence that HITLER is throwing his whole forces into this battle.

BRITISH and FRENCH civilian morale has NOT been shaken and remains prepared for all eventualities.

The parachute menace is recognised but we are forearmed. Success in ROTTERDAM appears to be due to the co-operation of local GERMANS and NAZI sympathisers.

Anti-Italian publicity is to be avoided as long as ITALY does NOT enter the war since MUSSOLINI is apparently trying to provoke us into alleged hostile action.

W. Williams
Lt-Col.
G.S. 6 Aus Div.

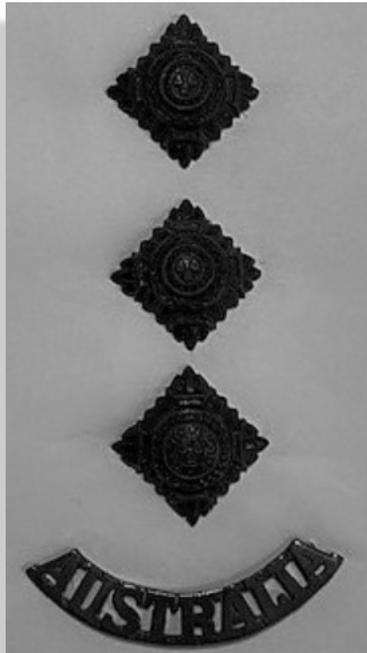
GAZA.

17 May 40.

Distribution: List "B".

7

Good Company



Apart from commandos and other specialised forces usually raised for a particular purpose, a battalion is the smallest fighting unit which may be said to be self-contained. It can feed itself; care for its sick and wounded. It has medics, cooks, grocers, storemen, postmen, policemen, engineers and clerks, who record all things great and small. And to fill the needs of the human spirit a battalion has a padre and a band – bugles and colours to give mystique, beauty and dignity to its ceremony. It has wheels to move with, eyes and ears to see and hear with, a network to speak with and mortars to roar with. But all these amenities and services are there for one purpose, to aid, succour, and support the fists the battalion fights with.

These are its four rifle companies. A rifle company usually fights with a strength of about 100 all ranks – 10 or 15 at company headquarters to command and service the company, and about 30 in each of the 3 platoons. A company is probably the largest formation in which everyone knows everyone else. It is a family.

Not as a Duty Only – An Infantryman’s War – Henry ‘Jo’ Gullett

Re Joining the Family

In Ian’s absence, 2/7th Bn trained hard at Pucka, with a focus on fitness and individual skills as well as training at platoon and company level, by day and night. The ‘39/40 Summer had been hot and there had been diversions, such as assisting with bushfire fighting close by in Pyalong.

Some Bren guns were made available by short term loan for training and introductory range practices; shortly before embarkation they were issued with new helmets, ground sheets and brand-new .303 Lee Enfield SMLE III* rifles. Delivered packed in grease, each required thorough cleaning, testing and zeroing (firing and sights adjustment to suit the owner’s eye) before use.

Having impressed the hierarchy with good behaviour, discipline, bearing and presentation, 2/7 Bn was selected to accompany HQ 6 Div, including a contingent of Nurses, on RMS *Strathaird* as part of the second Middle East troop convoy. Clearly, Myrtle had already shaped his unit’s demeanour.

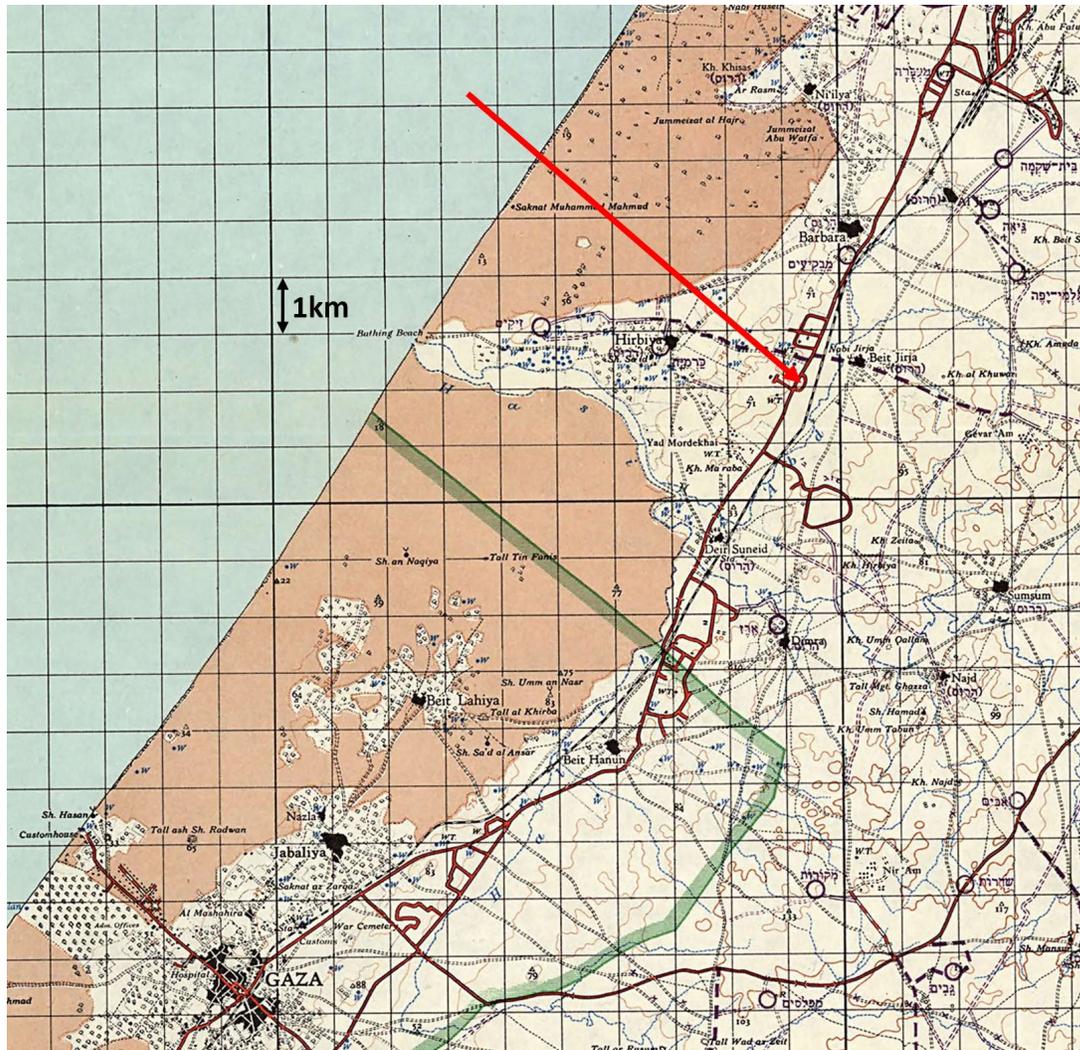
As *Strathaird* had not yet been converted to a troopship, this voyage was very comfortable compared to later troopships. They left Melbourne 15 Apr, travelling via Fremantle, Colombo and Aden. News that the German Army had invaded Holland and Belgium had been received with some excitement as bringing action nearer.

Disembarking at Kantara, 2/7 Bn landed late on 17 May. After enjoying a meal accompanied by some warm English beer, they boarded their train to Palestine and left at 0300 18 May. There were 2 carriages for the officers and a number of goods carriages – not unlike cattle trucks; there were no seats – for the troops; 20 soldiers plus gear to each one.

Pte Matthews⁶: *“We went up to Palestine in cattle trucks. It was as hot as blazes and there was a sandstorm blowing. We had these thick serge uniforms on and just about melted on the train. We had to carry full packs and our kit, loaded up like camels”.*

⁶ VX 5175 Allan Ernest Matthews

Around 5 hours later, the train halted to unload at camp site L3, Beit Jirja. Ian was there to meet them as the railway line bordered their camp's rear boundary. Ian and others were all wearing greatcoats – looking very overdressed to the already warm arrivals. They informed them to not worry – it was cool, but it should warm up soon! On the battalion notice board was pinned a 9cm long scorpion, with the warning: 'Beware of these bastards – they bite'. Welcome to Palestine!



Gaza – Beit Jirja, Location of 2/7th Bn Lines indicated – Palestine 1940

16 Bde Units had set up each Bn's camp site, so it was in reasonable shape to receive some 850 men. Tents had been erected for accommodation, and there were spartan huts for kitchens and messes, plus administration buildings. Some of the land in the coastal strip was cultivated but most inland areas were barren, stony and quite flat save for sand drifts and the occasional wadis (dry creek bed) which cut through the landscape.

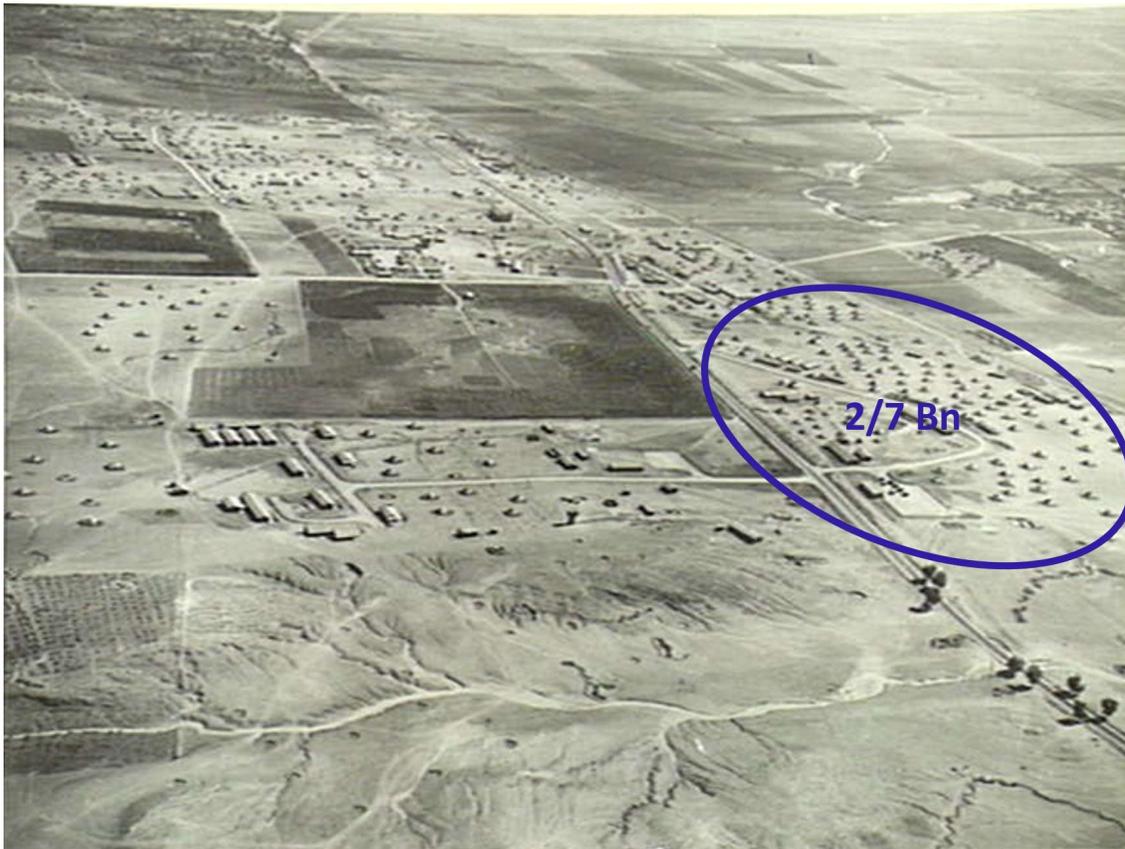
Ian's Company second in command at Bardia earned his nickname 'Wadi Mac' here. Matthews: *"You would be on exercise somewhere, sitting around taking things with a grain of salt, when Macfarlane would pop out of a wadi somewhere – 'Ah – Nobody on guard! I could have cut all your throats'. So, that's where his name came from"*.

There were plentiful sand dunes between them and the sea – the orange/brown areas on the map. The fertile areas appeared sandy, however bloomed with some fertilizer and water. In areas there were watermelons, grapes, millet, oranges, grapefruit and other fruit trees. Citrus was plentiful, cheap and well appreciated.

Arriving troops looked at this new and strange land like Ian had; most were familiar with the biblical references and the obvious age of all civilization made Australia's 150 years of western settlement seem trifling. The ancient city of Jerusalem was a highlight for most.

Beit Jirja translated literally into "Home of George" – so all diggers quickly became known as George – "*Saida George!*" was a commonly heard phrase used by the local Arabs.

That day was hot, with the khamsin blowing; diggers went straight to work to make home out of their camp and quarters amongst the featureless terrain. The canteens were stocked and there was some cold Melbourne beer available at the end of the day to refresh the diggers. While training, beer was rationed to '2 pints, per man, per day, perhaps'. Teetotallers quickly accumulated a circle of very good friends.



The Home of George - 17 Brigade Lines, Beit Jirja Palestine May – Sep 1940

With over 4 months in Palestine behind him, Ian's accumulated knowledge of the area, the systems and procedures, the people and the situation were vital for a unit setting up to quickly resume training. His experience in the courses he had completed, plus working with British and Australian units as they organized and conducted training activities in the area would now be brought to bear.

Ian would have been busy preparing and delivering briefs for all levels, escorting reces, arranging introductions, liaising with neighbours. It is likely Ian had prepared at least the first week's training program for the battalion. Ian would have been busy briefing his CO and liaising with their fostering units; no doubt each catching up on each other's news and renewing his friendships.

Ian found he had been appointed as OC B Coy – he immediately would need to become familiar with the key people he would work with, arrange to take over from his predecessor and get on with training.



Each company was commanded by a Capt or Maj, with a Lt as second in command. It consisted of a command element and three platoons, making around 100-110 at full strength⁷. Within the command element was a small protection party, usually including a spare Bren Gun and a sniper. Medics, signallers (runners) and a 'Q' (quartermaster – stores & supplies) section made up the HQ – it was common to find some of these people allocated to the platoons, depending on their task.

Harry



VX34 Maj "Harry" Marshall was OC Headquarters (HQ) Coy, 2/7 Bn where he served until just prior to the Battle of Bardia. Harry was a senior Company Commander.

He was appointed Bn Second in Command (2IC) for the battle.

Both being Company Commanders, he and Ian were peers and they worked together often.

Harry wrote extensive notes for his wife from his recollections whilst a Prisoner of War (POW) in Germany.

"Sol Green was also there. If you remember he left before us and had done many things for our comfort. Starting the mess was one, and (when we arrived) had some beer on ice. It was wonderful.

(Our first meal in the holy land) was rather a scratch one but hunger is the best sauce and Sol with his limited time and chances between taking over stores and erecting a camp had done wonders.

⁷ Operational units are rarely at full strength due to absences from casualties, sickness and courses.

It was more than we expected to walk into an erected camp and not have to settle down and do all the work ourselves.

A week after our arrival was Empire Day (24 May) so we decided on a celebration. Alan Bamford⁸ had a portable wireless set which was a great boon. We had a bottle of Gin from the boat, a bottle of Beenleigh Rum that Unk had brought from Australia and a bottle of whisky.

We all got into Theo's (Walker) tent and talked and drank the lot⁹ whilst waiting for the King's speech¹⁰. If you remember it was a very moving speech – very sincere and expressed the Empire's determination. When it had finished and they played the National Anthem, we all rose and stood solemnly to attention and really meant it.

Outside the (Officers) mess was a blank space to the road but Sol Green bought some orange and lemon trees and we employed a few Wogs to dig it up and straighten it out."

Training of all types started immediately and because training had progressed at Pucka in the interim, they were not 3 Months behind 16 Bde. Day and night exercises of varying scales also commenced in the local areas; most initially found it difficult to get their legs used to constantly patrolling in sandy areas, however they adjusted quickly. Due to the mid-day heat the training regime was changed to allow rest from 1130 to 1600 each day, as the long hot Palestinian Summer approached its peak.

Due to the dispersal of the camp, activities and timings were via a series of bugle calls – there were calls for revile, meals, parade, last post, and lights out. There were many other calls which they learned to recognise.

Matthews: *"When you finished work, or you didn't have any sentry duty you had the night off. You could then go to the canteen; it was a place where you could write so I used to go to write letters home. Every night there was a two-up game...the fellows used to play until dark. The weather was beautiful and we didn't need any blankets at night....you would put on your pyjamas, lie on top and sleep like a baby.*

We trained all the time. We would get up at 0500 and go on exercises....back to our tents around midday for a siesta and back on parade at 1700 for more work in the evening. There were lots of company and battalion field exercises. We seemed to be busy all the time.

Every four nights or so B Coy would be on guard duty. Mounting the guard was great ceremony; we would get dressed up in our uniforms, polish our boots and mount the guard at 1800".

The situation in France dominated discussions as the catastrophe unfolded via daily news bulletins on the radio. For a period, most expected their stay in the Middle East would be short before transit to France. Then to England. But, would they be able to get there in time to make a difference?

⁸ VX 16063 Pte Alan John Bamford – Missing Presumed Dead 20 May 41

⁹ There would be around 10-15 people present

¹⁰ HM King George VI - Empire Day Address - 24 May 1940 (This can be searched and played on YouTube)

Two weeks after 17 Bde's arrival in Palestine – just four weeks after Germany invaded France, Dunkirk was abandoned and England stood alone in Europe against Nazi Germany.

Digging became a priority as the reality of war grew. As training progressed, so did the digging of air raid trenches and digging in each tent floor 18" below ground level in order to give cover from flying shrapnel. It was decided to relocate and separate many tents to disperse them as targets.

The new routine was broken occasionally by performing 'flag waving' exercises where a platoon of troops, fully equipped and with an officer would visit various villages. The officer would pay a courtesy call to the village Chief or Mukhtar, taking coffee with him. The troops would take up defensive positions around the village. The Australians usually got on very well with the Arabs; many of them remembered the Australians from WW1 and had only ever known Australians as soldiers. Their furthest visit was to Beersheeba, stopping to see the site of the Australian Light Horse's famous WW1 charge. The Turkish defensive trenches still remained in 1940.



Ian's Souvenirs, Jerusalem

A leave roster was soon arranged for all personnel, so it was possible to visit Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Jericho and Jerusalem, initially travelling there early and back late the same day on Arab buses; eventually overnight accommodation became available.

Tel Aviv stood out as a close, seaside and relatively modern destination with a range of entertainment options.

Four-day leave passes to Cairo (Egypt) became available as well.

The pace of training quickened at all levels, steadily becoming more challenging and difficult to further develop their growing skills and fitness. Ian had sole responsibility for training B Company, and the standards they attained. Most diggers were trained to do the job 'one up'. If Ian was absent for any reason, such as leave, a conference, a reconnaissance or other, his 2IC immediately filled his role, a platoon commander stepped up to fill the 2IC role and so on – this is the way armies work – everybody simply took a step up and the training continued without pause, as it would eventually on operations if one fell.

There was much material to learn, practice, perfect, then repeat, and much of Ian's efforts was directed at planning training and assessing results.

Individual training became group training, day training became night training, training in webbing became training wearing the 'big pack'. Sand dunes burned leg muscles then sculpted them. Sections practiced patrolling, advancing, attacking, defending, withdrawing, digging in, wiring, camouflaging, concealing and all the routines associated with their ongoing tasks. Once competent by day, they would practice and become competent by night. Working in the moonlight became easy, some nights so light one could read the map and your compass clearly, and read a facial expression over 30 yards away. Some nights were so dark the only way to

navigate was by using compass bearings and very accurate counted paces. Diggers would hold onto the bayonet scabbard or webbing of the digger in front to avoid becoming separated.

'Ruling the night' gave great advantages and night patrolling in close proximity to enemy lines was an AIF specialty; there was a strict requirement for silent movement but with practice it became second nature – a nod, a point or a hand signal became all that was required to communicate intent. As Sections became competent, the activities were performed by platoons, then companies, then the battalion until all four companies, including supporting weapons could move and act as one.

In a defensive position, infantry no longer occupied the continuous trench lines of WW1, but groups of two-man weapon pits perhaps connected by shallow crawl trenches, sited so that each platoon or company occupied not a "line" but a "locality" and could defend itself against attack from the most likely direction – the gaps between were covered by observation and fire. Posts were also sited 'in depth' so that if an attacker overcame forward posts, there were more behind. Weapon pits gave protection against artillery, machine-guns, tanks, or air attack.

Diggers trained for the attack by learning to select and use the ground's protection and the cover of darkness or smoke. Against strong defences artillery would shell the enemy's positions, using a 'creeping barrage' to fall just ahead of the advance, plus fire in depth to counter the enemy's guns, then use 'infantry tanks' for close fire support. The tanks would advance with the infantry, break through enemy barbed wire, overcome machine-gun posts and assist to maintain momentum. In the attack, which would probably be undertaken in the half light of dawn or dusk, infantry would advance widely dispersed, with perhaps five yards between men, 100 yards between sections (of eight or ten men) and 200 yards between platoons.

This relatively new dispersion in attack and defence made coordination challenging and required junior leaders with intelligence and initiative. Training in all aspects had to be thorough.

During WW1 the AIF had mastered aggressive day and night patrolling to an extent that had bewildered the enemy and astonished senior British commanders. This mastery was to be replicated. Additionally, much focus was put on encouraging initiative at every level. These factors combined to develop exacting training and experience in patrolling, particularly at night. Diggers were to enter battle convinced they, and not the enemy, were to be the masters of no-man's land.

The requirement to attain and maintain battle fitness pervaded most activities; once a battle drill was mastered, it was done at the end of a 9-mile march. A single activity which initially exhausted the men would then be repeated. When on a field exercise, the 'war' went 24/7 – to match reality. Sleep was always at a premium.

Unsurprisingly, as training continued, it was important to allow some respite.



Ian's Photo – B Coy 2/7 Bn training in the Hirbiya Sand Dunes JT



Ian's Photo – B Coy 2/7 Bn still in WW1 webbing, in the Hirbiya Sand Dunes JT

Unless there was night training, in Beit Jirja there was time allocated most evenings so diggers could relax. The 'wet canteen' had beer available, carefully limited.

Being only 8km from the nearest beach, swimming was available there, Gaza Beach some 20km to the South East or Al Jura beach to the North.

Later, Al Jura became even more popular with diggers with the opening of its own wet canteen.

Between 2/7 Bn and the beach there were plenty of sand dunes for toughening up and several exercises involved patrolling to the beach area over the dunes, followed by a swim.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 002249
Bren Gun Shoot Jaffa Range – still wearing 'old' webbing AWM

New Bren Guns, Boys A/T rifles and 1937 pattern webbing were issued here so the 2/7th bade goodbye to most of their WW1 vintage kit. There were still shortages in 2" Mortars, compasses, binoculars and signals stores.

On 12 Jun the Bn commenced a 4-day bivouac at Jaffa range to become fully conversant with live firing of all their weapons; there was concurrent patrolling practice for those not 'on the mound' or 'in the butts'. Finding the range complex in a poor state; 2/7 Bn left it clean and tidy.

After the fall of France one man wrote *"the troops have not the slightest doubt that our road is the road of victory, though the feeling is that the loss of France will immeasurably lengthen the struggle."* The "Thirty Niners" of 6 Div now saw themselves fully justified for their decision to enlist early.

France's fall would lead to Australia's later Syrian campaign in Jun-Jul 41, against the Vichy French.

To further complicate matters, Italy declared war on France and England on 10 Jun. Their entry into the war was not surprising; the Italian colony of Libya caused the most immediate concern and so on 14 Jun British forces advanced across the Egypt/Libyan border and captured Fort Capuzzo. Italy's declaration of war was welcomed on the grounds they would be *less* useful to Germany as a belligerent than as a neutral, and that it would bring the Australians into the fight the sooner.

Italy's entry into the War plus the loss of the French Mediterranean fleet caused a headache for the Royal Navy – it now had to be stretched across the Atlantic *and* the Mediterranean Oceans.

This factor would stretch the Royal Navy and heavily influence the fall of Singapore 18 Months later.

On an exercise on 12 Jul, diggers wore their new steel helmets for the first time. Next came the first three-day brigade exercise for 17 Bde; the first of many to come. Now, all 3 battalions had to learn to work as one, under command of Brig Stan Savage.

Stan



Stanley George Savage was born 26 Jun 1890 at Morwell. At age 12, Stan commenced work as a blacksmith's striker. He was later a Scoutmaster and a Sunday school teacher.

In 1915 Savage enlisted in the AIF. Posted to 24 Bn, he landed at Gallipoli in Sep then was commissioned as a Lt at Lone Pine on 9 Nov. Sent to France Mar 1916, after taking part in Pozières and Mouquet Farm Jul-Aug, he was promoted Capt. He was wounded at Flers then after Bullecourt was awarded the MC.

Volunteering for special service in Persia (modern-day Iran) he was awarded DSO for protecting Assyrian refugees while under intense fire; he was also MiD three times.

Stan struggled to re-establish himself after the war, eventually becoming a successful salesman. He joined the Militia in 1920, becoming CO of 37th and later 24th Bn. He founded the Legacy movement in the 1920's.

As commander of 10 Bde he was promoted Brig in 1938. At the outbreak of WW2, Stan was appointed to command the AIF's 17 Bde.

Mail

Early in Aug a large quantity of sea mail arrived from Australia – the first received since they left in Apr. The sheer quantity arriving made life difficult for the Bn mail orderly who had to sort the mail for 700 people. The mood of the Bn always improved when mail arrived, and the wet canteens were noticeably quiet while all read through the news from home. After this, mail started to arrive more regularly.

Later that Month, B Coy lost their first soldier – Pte Jack Reynolds – from a brief illness. He was buried with full military honours at Gaza War Cemetery. The Bn Band attended with a firing party and B Company provided the guard of honour, commanded by Ian. There may have been a wake afterwards. Almost certainly, Ian wrote to his parents and/or spouse with some words of comfort as well as some personal observations – a very confronting letter to sit down to write, the first time. Ian expected to write many more such letters once action was joined.

27 Aug was Ian's 29th birthday and the day before, he and B Coy had commenced one week's duty performing one of the more popular tasks amongst the diggers – providing security guards for the town of Gaza as well as the airport; this was provided for 1 Australian Corps which was based in the town, including guarding the Corps Commander's house. At the time 1 (Aust) Corps was

commanded by VX1 LtGen Thomas Blamey who had arrived from Australia in Jun. 1 (Aust) Corps was eventually comprised of 6, 7 and 9 Divs.

LtGen Blamey was the only member of the entire force to live in Palestine with his wife.

There was enough time off duty to allow Gaza's streets to be strolled and the opportunity to enjoy some local food and drink – this, coupled with the break in training made for a 'cushy' week.

"Harry" Marshall noted: "The first Guard (we performed) was the Gaza guard. *Sol Green had the first with his company and one of his troops got on to native liquor and became violent. The same gentleman had various breakouts and was always a trial, but Sol persisted with him and he turned up trumps later as on as a cook.*

The Divisional Commander's (MajGen Ivan Mackay) name amongst our Brigade was Ivan the Terrible Turk later shortened to ITT.

Immediately following the security task, Ian was attached for three weeks 'special duty' in Palestine. The nature of this duty is not clear however in this period 17 Bde was issued orders to move and then departed for Egypt. This 'duty' may have been administrative, however Ian may have been employed arranging a horse racing meeting at 'New Flemington Track' in Barbara village, 17km outside Gaza.

There is some family talk regarding a letter received from Ian mentioning a role in the AIF Race Meeting held at Barbara 7 Sep 40. The meet was meticulously organised and conducted, including seven races where horses and camels raced and a mixture of Soldiers, Arabs and Jews mixed. Ian's name does not appear in the official programme however he had at least one key role, as noted by "Harry" Marshall:



Sol Green said he could get a horse so off he went to Beersheeba about 40 miles away. After a little trouble he and Halliday¹¹ got permission and a truck and were away for most of the day. They had traced a Sheikh with a good horse although a bit aged and had half persuaded him to let him run in our Battalion name. The old chap before he would let us train him which was one thing we wanted to do, came along and saw Theo and everything.

He was a grey stallion and contrary to expectations of a stallion had a very sweet temper. Instead of biting or kicking he would let anyone fondle him and was actually a very clever trick horse. We had a jockey in my Company and he was made trainer and he and a little Arab boy lived and slept

¹¹ Likely VX 63 Capt Gilbert Henry Halliday MC, ED

with the horse. Our horse had one queer training habit. He liked beer and it was part of his diet and he got a bottle of Australian beer a day. We of course had to share his training expenses for a month.

(On the day) Gorman somewhere or other had got hold of racing blouses and caps and everything looked like a real racehorse.

We had I think the best horse in the race but coming to the turn our jockey pulled wide in his excitement forgetting that Arab horses do not respond to the rein but to a touch on the neck. Anyway, "Jim II" our horse put in a paralysing finish and was only beaten by little more than a nose in a wonderful finish. The old grey had lived up to his reputation and although he was beaten we were all satisfied. Jim II went back to Beersheeba with the rug I had bought him, his own.

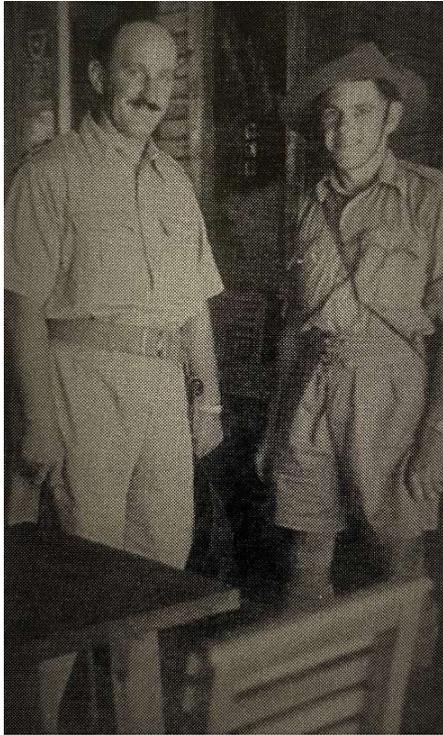
How will I?

Most AIF officers had not been to war, and there were many discussions with peers about how they might manage morale and lead soldiers in battle. Ever present was the unspoken question: "How will I cope with battle....If I feel fear will I be able to suppress it and keep going?" Any personal shortfalls would be bad enough without around 100 witnesses – and their critiques would be merciless.

For Ian this was to be the big unknown; two ex 2/2nd officers later recalled of the time: *"We were very lucky...formed completely of volunteers. We had good blokes – in the main really first class. A few got taken off the ship and sent back to jail or something, but this was grossly exaggerated as they were a few only.*

We were also very lucky in our CO....(he) was what the unit wanted. (He) was fairly gruff but gave us all the help and assistance he could... gave us the rudiments of war and gave us a lot to think about. Don and I used to wander around after the evening meal, around the orange orchards and talk a lot about these things because we had no idea what to expect or what it was all about. We used to walk up and down the verandah of the mess and down to the track that led to the orchard and back again until the early hours of the morning, working out how out how we were going to react to things.

We worried about how we were going to do our bit in relation to operations...and (then) worried that you were doing the right thing by your troops – that you were training them for what they were really going to experience. You can give them weapon training, you can do all these sorts of things, but there's got to be...some sort of psychological training so they are ready to fight a war. And neither of us had any psych training. We didn't really know whether we were going in the right direction and it worried us...Don't know whether it did any good in the long run, but it didn't do any harm".



Ian and Pte CCV Bramley – Palestine 1940 (Matthews)

As Sep arrived, the pace of change quickened. Enough weapons were issued to almost complete the unit's requirements for operations, plus further vehicles; although these were pre owned by the British Army and no spares or tools accompanied them.

On 7 Sep, a Warning Order was issued for preparation to move to Egypt in the coming week. The next night the canteen caught fire mysteriously, taking some time to extinguish. The cause was not discovered, even given rumours an audit had been scheduled for the following day. Despite the fire there seemed to be a plentiful supply of beer and smokes for a few days afterwards.

From 10 Sep the Bn packed; they departed by train for Kantara in the very early morning 14 Sep. It was now cooler at night, and the troops were pleased to find they had proper carriages this time for the trip.

They may have heard that the day prior the Italians had attacked, re captured Fort Capuzzo and crossed the border into Egypt.

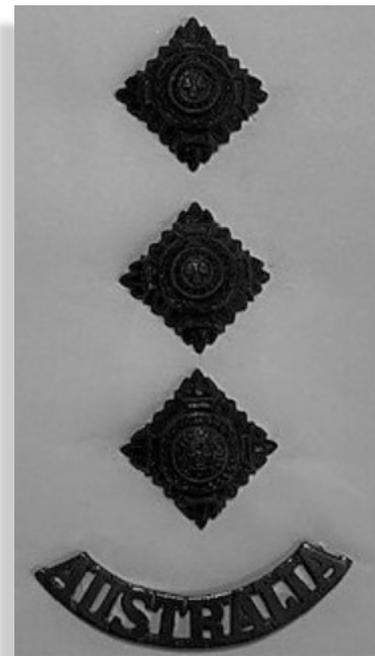
The local Arabs of Beit Jirja were farewelled; as usual the Diggers, having treated the locals with respect, had formed warm relations with them. The Arabs hoped the British would not be replacing them as they had found the 'tommies' tended to hit and kick them.

In four Months, 2/7th had become almost ready for operations. Ian worked day and night to ensure B Coy was as ready as he could make it for battle; he knew very well that lives would depend upon his ability to shape them and make them ready. By this time there were no strangers in B Coy; as a body of troops it would have its own personality, strengths and weaknesses. It was undoubtedly a very good company.

In many ways B Coy would have reflected the personality of its commander.

8

State of Grace



At that time an infantry battalion at battle strength was made up of about 600 men. But 600 men do not make a battalion. The 600 men have to learn the soldiers' trades and disciplines. Even then they are not a battalion. An effective battalion in being, ready to fight, implies a state of mind – I am not sure if it is not a state of grace. It implies a giving and taking, a sharing of almost everything – possessions, comfort, affection, trust, confidence, interest. It implies a certain restriction, and at the same time a certain enriching and widening of the human spirit. It implies doing a hundred things together – marching to the band, marching all night long, being hungry, thirsty, exhausted, filthy; being near but never quite mutinous. It involves not the weakening but the deferment of other bonds and interests; the acceptance that life and home are now with the battalion. In the end it is possible to say 'the battalion thinks' or 'the battalion feels'; and this is not an exaggeration.

Not as a Duty Only – An Infantryman's War – Henry 'Jo' Gullett

State of Grace

By now, 2/7th Bn and 17 Bde were almost ready to fight. By Aug 1940, Brig Savige believed 17 Bde "could give a good account of itself in action". What remained was to practice playing their role as part of 6 Div. A move into Egypt allowed this training to occur whilst being able to be called upon at short notice if the strategic situation required. All of 6 Div (less 19 Bde; still in Palestine) – approximately 15,000 diggers – relocated to Helwan to complete training and equipping.

The train paused at Kantara where 2/7th Bn breakfasted then crossed the Suez Canal, heading south of Cairo to Helwan Camp where they arrived late that afternoon. That night they slept on the sand. By the time they were properly established at Helwan, Italian forces had established themselves to the East of Sidi Barrani, under 600km away.

"We encamped now on a desert flat. On one side a great range of limestone cliffs, forbidding and bare, reared themselves. On the other side was the green Nile valley, the brown river and beyond the rolling Libyan Desert...Our Palestinian training had been hard but was nothing compared to the immediate future. The heat was greater...and the going harder, for the desert was broken by many hills and valleys filled with soft sand or broken rock. And there were no fruit vendors with juicy fruit...transport was bogged frequently...and could be got out only with the aid of a (Bren Gun) carrier, our 6-wheeler or manpower".

At Helwan, some remaining equipment shortfalls were filled, making more realistic exercises possible; but many shortages remained, particularly ammunition for training. Here, 2/2nd Field Regiment (17 Bde's field artillery), fired the only live ammunition spared to it for training with their brand new 25 pounder field guns before going into action.

Located on the banks of the Nile, Helwan village was once known for its Sulphur Baths. The camp was of pre-war vintage and well equipped; during the war it grew to cover a large area. 25km to the North West across the Nile valley the Pyramids of Giza could be seen. The camp was only 3km from the Nile and its fertile flats, but it may as well have been on the moon. Slightly elevated above the river, here was nothing but dry, sandy, dusty desert. Just to the East were plentiful hills and features (all dry) to train in. It was very hot.

Ian's diggers immediately found they missed the swimming and the plentiful citrus fruits of Palestine. Swimming in the Nile (or in any fresh water) was banned due to the risk of bilharzia.

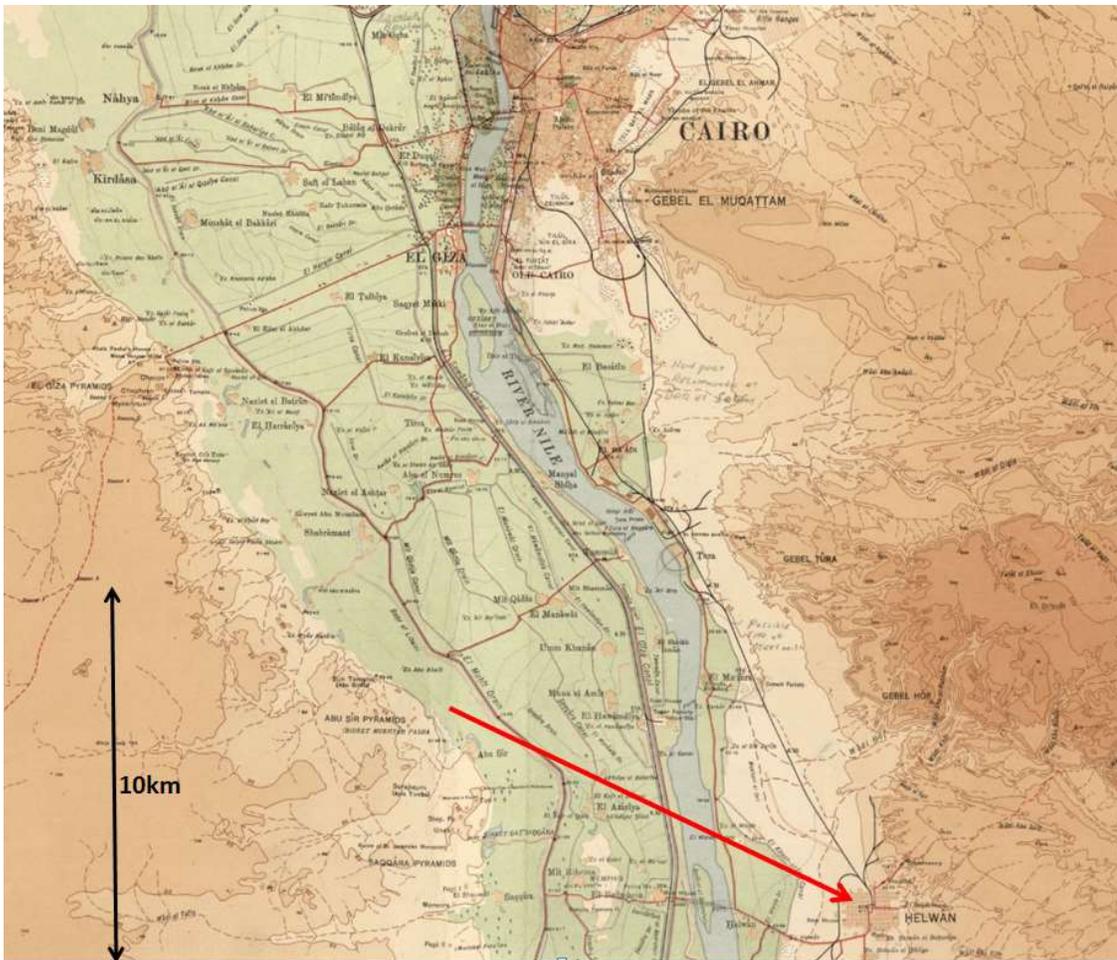
Cairo was 30 km to the North, around 40 mins by train and initially a third of the men were given Cairo leave until 0100 on nights not spent training or in the field. Cairo was intoxicating; it was compared to Paris as an attraction, further enhanced with the colour and confusion of an Asian city. There was "lots of fun – but at what a cost!". The men found Egyptians less easy to get on with, and Egyptian police more aggressive than the Palestinians they had become used to.

When on leave, most diggers were reasonably well behaved. But these were fit, active young men from all backgrounds, training for war a long way from home, sharing uncertain futures, and there were some disturbances.

Australian military police (MP's) initially worked with British MP's to maintain order but found better results when they patrolled independently – because diggers tended to resent any but their own police speaking to them.

News comes from Captain Ian Green, who is serving abroad in Palestine, or thereabouts, that comforts had been distributed to the troops over there from the Comforts Fund and had been greatly appreciated by them all. He enclosed a snap taken on September 12th and in it we recognised Lieut Dick Unkles, Bennett and Capt. Ian Green himself. He says he is down to 14 stone now!

Gippsland Times 7 Oct 40



Helwan Camp – 1940's map

LCPL Matthews: *“(At Helwan) The training was really hard. Palestine at least had some cultivation but here it was pure sand and was like training on a beach. We now started Brigade training. The training at Helwan nearly killed us. We would go out at dawn and spend all day slogging through the sand. It was hot, 100 degrees or more. At night it was cold.*

When the night exercises were on, we would practise moving from one place to another using a compass or maybe the North Star. The desert is like the sea; there are no landmarks such as a house or a tree and you would get lost all of the time. It was very interesting, I used to love it.

There was a terrific mess and the food was better than Palestine. If you were in camp that night you could get leave and go into Cairo. Some parts of Cairo were really evil. On the other hand, there were some good street cafes in the centre of Cairo. I did a trip on the Nile; I went to see the Pyramids and rode around on a donkey; for the six weeks it was like being a tourist”.

Training commenced immediately and there were few interruptions; one being Wed 18 Sep when all Australians voted in the 1940 General Election to be held at home the following Saturday. The United Australia Party (UAP) under PM Robert Menzies was returned with a decreased majority.

The coming desert war was expected to be highly mobile, so new tactical formations were introduced for desert operations – based on the ‘box’ Formation. This formation sought to balance mobility with protection for an advancing Bde. Tanks and anti-tank guns led, artillery was located to the flanks and rear, with truck mounted infantry and other "soft-skinned" vehicles inside the box. The new formations required specific drills and procedures for advancing, turning, stopping, and defending, when ‘in’ and ‘out’ of contact with the enemy. Every level from Sect to Div required teaching, training and practice so the drills became second nature and the transition from one to the other became swift and smooth.

This required considerable effort to learn, master, then practice – again and again – at Bde then at Div level. There was a three day exercise every week, these covered up to 20 miles per day in the rock and desert. Around Helwan, Bde exercises then the first Div exercise were conducted. Each exercise had explicit objectives to be practiced; critiqued and remedied afterwards so improvement was continuous. Errors at any level in the planning or conduct of battles would be costly.

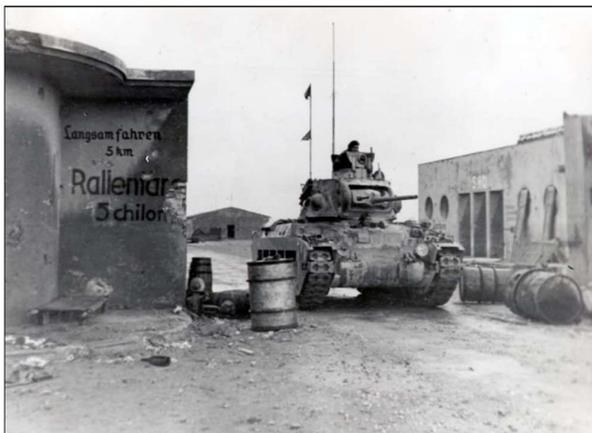
Aside from training and Cairo leave, highlights included an air raid on Cairo on 20 Oct, and a violent thunderstorm the week prior. Members of B Coy were also detached to provide guards for the extensive ammunition dump established nearby for the upcoming campaign. This was situated inside a huge cave excavated by ancient Egyptians when quarrying stone to build the pyramids.

In late Oct as the weather cooled, a move was ‘on’ with all packing undertaken prior to an overnight rail move to Ikingi Maryut where they arrived mid-morning 29 Oct. Ian was OC of the troop train for this move. Everybody felt their journey towards what they had all signed up for – ‘the sharp end’ was finally underway. The prior day, Italy had invaded Greece.

Disembarking all 600 members of a Battalion from a train was at best somewhat confused; retrieving all the gear and weapons and reuniting them with their owners, (almost all the kit is identical) collecting stores and that sort of thing. In darkness, confusion levels compounded. All

troops and kit had to be fully accounted for before they could move off, with a series of checks and re checks.

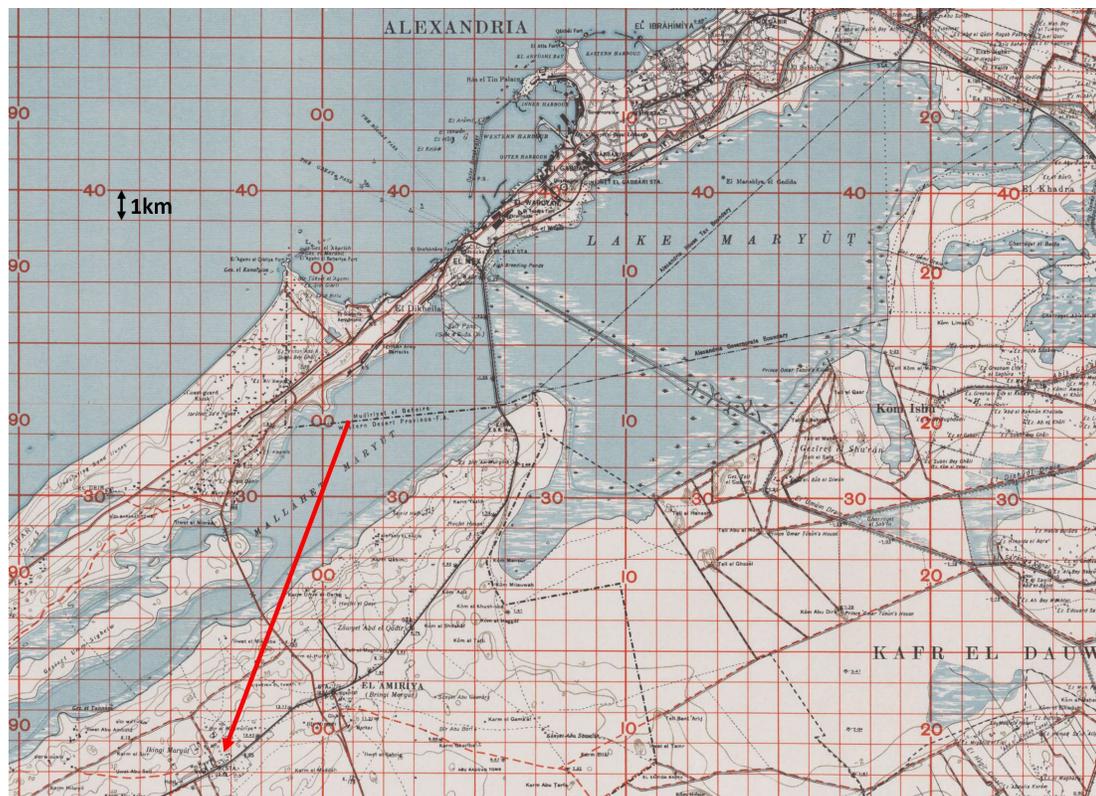
Ikingi Maryut was the site of a staging camp located close to Alexandria. Before the war it was a weekend spot for wealthy Egyptians, with attractive bungalows in the vicinity; Egypt's King Farouk owned a rest house in the area. The camp was nearby to the South and the troops were all tented in the sand and the dust, as usual. There were no facilities although some of the HQs were located in bungalows. The whole area, and all areas to the south – was desert.



7RTR Matilda tank – pennants were for identification and some signalling

Around this time, 7th Royal Tank Regiment (7RTR) had arrived from England, equipped with "Matilda" tanks. The Western Desert's flat, open terrain lent itself to mobile operations, even though the dusty, sandy environment was as harsh on machines as on men.

The Matilda was an "I" Tank – designed to provide close support to infantry. It was slow but well armoured and its main gun (2 pounder), whilst outclassed against other tanks, was very effective for bunker busting.



Ikingi Maryut indicated – Alexandria 1:100,000 Map; 1941. All good exercises take place on the edge of a map.....

The move to Ikingi Maryut, Amiriya and Burg el Arab brought 6 Div to the edge of the battlefield, yet within a short journey to the pleasures of Alexandria. Still without 19 Bde, they took a Polish brigade under command and became responsible for the defence of a position on the edge of the Western Desert covering Lake Maryut and the Rosetta Nile – this would form the last line of defence against a possible further Italian advance towards Alexandria.

Early morning 16 Oct the men watched their first air raid on Alexandria, searchlights groping the sky, anti-aircraft shells climbing and winking and Italian bombs flashing at ground level. They were soon introduced to the dust storms that sweep the Libyan desert; *"dust such as we have never known before; you breathe, eat and sleep in dust"*, wrote one diarist.

They immediately set to digging in – all trenches 6 feet deep and tent floors to 3 feet. Within range of Italian bombers, tents were dispersed 30 metres apart. Digging took over a week to complete as some areas were almost solid rock and all digging was by hand. It was here that the diggers first experienced consistent water rationing – the sheer volume and weight of water required for an army in the field presents a key logistical challenge – water is required before an army can fight for long. In the western desert all fresh water was scarce and had to be delivered forward by truck, usually hundreds of kilometres from the supply point.

The dust and the ongoing lack of water caused diggers to refer to this phase as "training to be camels".



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

003391

Infantry and Bren Gun Carriers Training – Western Desert Oct 1940

LCPL Matthews: *“At Ikingi Maryut it was more serious. We were dispersed over miles of desert. We began to live as a company and as a platoon. Instead of talking about 2/7th Bn, you began to talk about B Coy because that was all you were ever associated with.*

There was little rest and the training was intensive. We got up at the crack of dawn and would go out, march all day and practice capturing areas. We also practised going without water. Quite often the battalion would carry out night exercises to see whether we could move from one place to another on a compass bearing. It was pitch black at night in the desert. The officers ran around with their compasses and made sure the company was walking in the correct direction.

The next day the officers would have a talk about it, trying to work out the faults. We were being trained for when we had to do it for real”.

There was a short break in training during this period. The Bn Medical Officer (MO) conducted a ‘short arm’ inspection, followed up by lectures on North African spiders and snakes, then the dangers, and treatment of VD. The short arm inspection would be performed by Platoon. 30 men march up, in 3 columns, halt, right turn, open order, stand at ease, then wait. Then the order comes: ‘Drop ‘em!’. Trousers were unfastened and lowered, then the MO and his medical orderlies would inspect front and rear, moving down the line. Inspections would cover chafing and other skin conditions, as well as any sign of infection, front or rear. There were always wisecracks. But finally, life would go on less those who required treatment. ‘Short arm’ inspections were regular, and there is little privacy within an army in the field.

Still more three-day exercises were undertaken in the surrounding area, interspersed with route marches and other forms of continuation training. During Nov, plans were implemented to return all surplus kit to stores in preparation for operations. This included excess personal property as well as ‘camp stores’ such as tents, sporting and office equipment.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 042070
A pistol makes the ‘Skipper’ an obvious target

It was normal for officers such as Ian to carry a pistol as their personal side arm in 1940. Ian carried a Webley Mk VI service revolver, introduced during WW1. Having a .455” calibre, the Webley was one of the most powerful top-break revolvers produced.

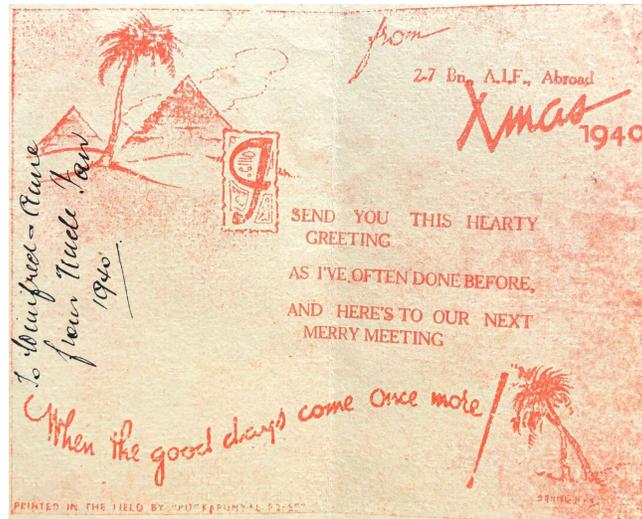
It was useful for close protection, but pistols are rarely accurate enough to hit man sized targets more than 30 yards away. Compare this with a rifle’s effective range of 300 yards in open desert, and you are not in the same contest.

The pistol allowed for an officer to provide for his own close protection; it also offered a subtle reminder that his key responsibility was to manage and direct the conduct of the battle rather than to try and fight it himself. Unfortunately, like carrying a map, using binoculars, pointing at things and having others come and go to speak, a pistol’s side effect was to make the owner stand out. The above (staged) photo from later in the campaign shows this – and the nature of Ian’s role made him a ‘high value’ target.

During battle, it makes good sense that a (taxpayer paid) shot fired will have more effect if it is used to remove a commander, and the more senior the better. After high casualty rates, during the later South West Pacific campaigns, Australian officers came to habitually carry rifles and remove their badges of rank, so they were less conspicuous.

Ian found time in early Nov to dispatch Christmas Cards to Australia, allowing some six weeks for delivery.

Regular evening leave was allowed in Alexandria when training schedules allowed; There was a range of venues to suit all tastes; several hotels were popular spots where officers gathered when on leave – it was common at this time to walk into a bar and immediately meet people you knew, from your or other units.



Card sent to Winifred & Anne Webster MD

It was clear that wherever they went next, they were either heading into action, or action would soon find them. With this proximity in mind, conversations were animated and the evenings long.

In early Nov, plans to send 17 Bde to Crete were considered, however were quickly shelved. One wonders if this was the subject of discussions amongst senior officers of the battalions at the time. Nothing came of this, but the ill-fated Greece and Crete campaign of Apr 1941 started to attract senior commanders' attention from that time.

The arrival of 19 Bde on 14 Nov completed 6 Div and made the first full Divisional exercise possible. From 21 – 23 Nov the two 'older' brigades made a mock attack on Burg el Arab, and 19 Bde, fresh from several severe exercises in Palestine, defended. It was a good test of staff work and leadership, but the men were ready for the real battles to come and when opposing units clashed, tempers ran hot, and the umpires were ignored.

When it was over the 17 Bde diarist noted they "could now undertake operations of any nature". 6 Div was just a year old but it had reached such a state of training and confidence that some of the 'old timers' thought it better than the AIF Divisions of 1918.

Nearly all officers and SNCOs had attended one or more of the British Middle East training schools; units and brigades had exercised side by side with British regulars and believed they now had little more to learn from them. Incompetent officers had been re posted and some new officers promoted from the ranks based on displayed merit. They had come a long way, and they were now ready for action.

Soon after, another two-day bivouac encountered unexpected, heavy rain for a full day and night – everybody became soaked and the exercise had to be cancelled.



Ian's Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders accoutrements

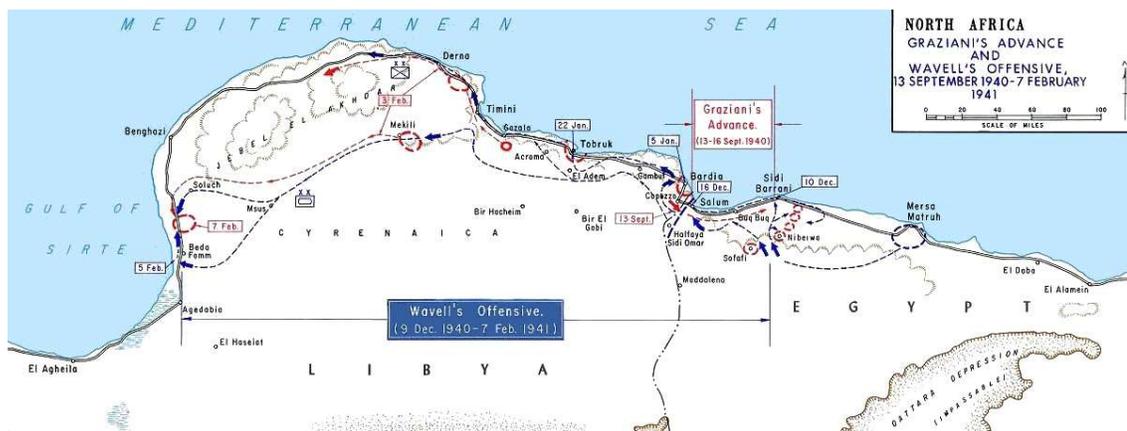
In Dec 1940, 2nd Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders was part of 11th Indian Infantry Bde, 4th Infantry Division (Indian), being readied to take part in the first phase of *Operation Compass*. It is likely that Ian met them and swapped these around this time.

They would have meant much to him. In 1938, Ian's Militia 52nd Bn was granted a linkage to 'The Camerons' and permission to use its Regimental March – 'March of the Cameron Men'. Such allegiances run deep.

Few allied formations in WW2 were as well prepared for their first operation as 6 Div was. Not least because the force was now complete and trained, the first major operations of what became the Western Desert Campaign were being planned to use 6 Div to deal with the Italian 10th Army's presence in Egypt.

Operation Compass was planned to push the Italians back. It had been planned as a five-day raid, with some expectation that the operation might continue to exploit any success. In his directive, Gen Wavell had written: "I do not entertain extravagant hopes but I do wish to make certain that if a big opportunity occurs, we are prepared morally, mentally and administratively to use it to the fullest." Exploitation of the 'big opportunity' to come would lead to 6 Div's participation in Battles from Bardia all the way across to Beda Fomm in early 1941.

A series of phases commencing 7 Dec 40 had 4 Indian Inf Div and tanks of 7RTR conducting a 'big left hook' around the Italian defensive line to the South of Sidi Barrani, using deception, artillery, Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) and limited air support. The armoured forces advanced through a gap between fortified camps which was not covered by obstacles or fire.



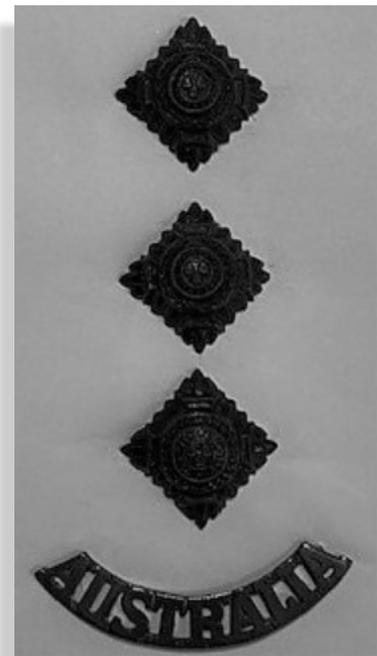
They subdued each position methodically from the flanks and/or rear of each. An attack on the rear of the Italians' Nibeiwa camp by infantry and Matilda tanks was then pushed through a poorly concealed gap in the Italians' perimeter minefield. Sidi Barrani itself fell on 10 Dec and the battle was over the following night.

Large numbers of prisoners were captured, and the defenders were put to flight towards Sollum and Bardia to the West. Wavell's Western Desert Force exploited this success, switching to a pursuit along the front as well as threatening the flank and forcing the rest of the 10th Army out of Egypt by 16 Dec; Sollum having fallen the day prior.

As Ian marked a year since leaving Australia, elements of the British force had cut the Bardia – Tobruk road, and the stage was now set for the second AIF's entry into WW2.

9

To the Sharp End



“If we had thought about it, we would have realised that there was no possibility of us being together for long once the fighting started. We would have realised also that the odds were strongly against each one of us surviving the war unless we were disabled. We did not think about such matters. It did not strike us as extraordinary or unfair that our generation should be called upon to fight.

*.....As volunteers we were there of our own free will anyhow.”
Not as A Duty Only – An Infantryman’s War Henry ‘Jo’ Gullett*

To the ‘Sharp End’

Exercises continued until 17 Bde’s final days at Ikingi Maryut. 2/7th Bn became duty Bn, tasked with manning company sized security posts at Amiriya and the local airport, then they started to pack for the next move which everybody knew was towards the front. This duty was called off.

It may seem strange to ‘civvies’ but, having mastered and practiced their roles together for over a year, most diggers felt very well prepared to enter the fight, they were confident and even looking forward to it. They had confidence in the training received; confidence in the skills they and their comrades possessed; they trusted their comrades and felt bound to return this trust; they understood the challenges to come, and the risks. They felt ready; they were ready. Matthews was promoted Cpl just before departure: *“This is why we had joined the army. We were going to fight...we were off to where the action was. We were well informed about the First AIF and we knew they had been pretty good. We also knew we had to be as good as them”.*

As Operation Compass unfolded, the British Western Desert Force broke the Italian lines near Sidi Barrani then pursued them to re take Sollum on 16 Dec. The now familiar pattern of striking camp, repacking and returning all that could not be taken with them was undertaken again in 17 Bde. In another sign operations were imminent; all kit bags were collected for storage in a safe area; not to be seen again until the unit came out of the line.

From here, the 2/7th would go forward carrying all they owned on their shoulders and backs. There was precious little room for any non-essential items; usually only what could fit in a tunic pocket.

Anticipating the spartan conditions to come, and taking the last opportunity to use cooking facilities, Christmas was celebrated on 19 Dec. Most of the day was relatively unstructured and the men ate well – far better than the usual daily rations. There was soup, turkey and roast potatoes, followed by pudding, fruit salad and cream. Beer (2 pints per man) was available, and hampers were distributed to each man. There were many thoughts, and conversations about home and family.

The Australian Comforts Fund (ACF) regularly sent Christmas hampers to troops abroad. The hampers caused a round of bartering – they comprised a plum pudding, cake, a small tin of fruit, tinned cream, razor blades and tobacco, donated or sponsored by members of the public.

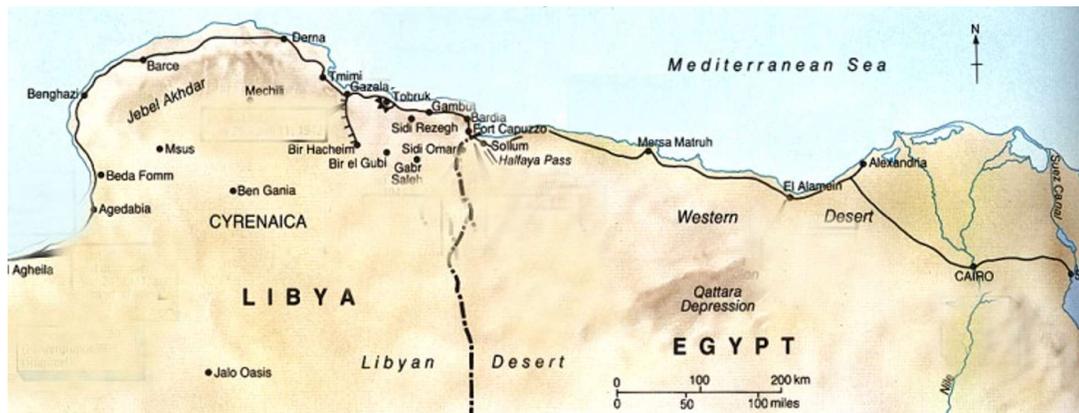


ACF Christmas hamper contents 1944

The delights within, like tinned fruit were traded for tobacco or cigarettes depending on taste. Private hampers were also provided and there was a 'gargantuan feast'. But the party, such as it was, finished early as there was a move 'on' next morning. Last minute conferences, orders, coordination, checks and packing kept many busy, particularly Ian.

Reveille the next morning was in the cold pre-dawn 0400. It was still as black as the inside of a cow – wearing all one owned, cold numb fingers packing up in the darkness by feel, shaving by feel using a tiny amount of cold water, cleaning an always dusty rifle made worse by dew, the sound of a rifle bolt being worked. Seeking a hot brew which one fervently hopes was available. Many familiar low voices near and far, a quiet chuckle, a muffled curse. A cough. A spit. A fart. Familiar noises of all these activities; clicks, clunks, scrapes, rustles, footsteps coming and going, water bottle corks being removed then replaced, other rifle bolts being worked as they were cleaned and reassembled. Stamping boots – cold feet; sounds of packing up. The stars above pricking the black sky, starting to fade as the light reached from the east, cigarettes glowing and the smell of tobacco. Silhouettes of people you've known for a year; all familiar – you could identify them by their silhouette, the angle of the helmet, the way the rifle was slung; their stance, their webbing, their smell. "Have the men ready to move at 2 mins notice." "Platoon commanders to me." "B Company fall in by Platoon."

Maj Marshall: "We marched out to the station at about 6 o'clock 200 yards between companies with the band playing – full marching order and bitterly cold."



It was to be a long day moving west as their journey towards the 'sharp end' commenced. The first part of the move was by train from Ikingi Maryut, however the train was delayed by high volumes of traffic along the line – all carrying troops, supplies, ammunition, fuel, water. Ian's 2IC had complained of a stomach upset after boarding the train and Ian had him replaced during the trip with one of B Company's platoon commanders, Lt 'Wadi Mac' Macfarlane. Lt 'Cec' Davis replaced 'Wadi' as OC 11 Pl.

Cpl Matthews: "The only thing I remember about the train trip was that trains in Egypt are dreadful".

The journey along Egypt's Mediterranean coast crossed a long stretch of virtually unchanging scenery. The road and rail parallel the coast and are rarely out of sight of the sea. To the South, the land rises only slightly until close to Sollum, and there is precious little vegetation of any sort.

This is the Libyan Desert (also known as the Western Desert); it is the Northern part of the Sahara Desert. In Digger/Tommy vernacular of the time, described as 'miles and miles of s**t coloured f**k all'¹². Armies came to appreciate (only) two benefits here; firstly, the flat terrain lent itself to the use of armoured formations (tanks etc) for wide sweeping movement, and secondly, low populations meant civilians were rarely placed at risk.

After travelling all day, the train arrived at Sidi Hanesh (40km East of Mersa Matruh) 0015 the following morning – they detrained and marched west five miles to the west of town. As they marched there was a violent sandstorm; luckily there was not far to go and, even better, hot tea and rum were issued on arrival. After occupying their night location, the troops were able to sleep until midday 21 Dec. As usual, sentries were posted in every Section by roster – all day and all night. It had been a 24 hour move.

The next day the Bn was repositioned tactically to make the most of their location, however little else occurred – 2/7th Bn remained here for several days. The following day, 'Myrtle', his 2IC and two Company Commanders left to conduct a reconnaissance of the Fort Capuzzo area to plan the upcoming move and the initial deployment – Ian was one of those and this task took several days. This was to be Ian's first visit to the front.

Cpl Matthews: *"At Mersa Matruh we camped in dug outs and trenches just as if we were in the field; it was pretty dusty. It was a buggler of a place, there was a dust storm while we were there. Capt Green went up to Bardia to reconnoitre the next position. He was gone for a couple of days and when he came back, he said it was going to be hard living and we had better get used to it. He told us what it was like to have a crap in the desert. You just dropped your strides..."* There was nowhere to hide in the desert.

In the meantime, an excellent swimming beach had been located close by and the troops enjoyed the opportunity to swim, escape the dust and have a wash of sorts, regardless of the cool weather. The 'real' Christmas Day was relatively slow, but the war was close, and the usual signs of an impending move showed again. The Bn was placed on 5 minutes' notice to move; meaning all were packed, ready to go – all that remained was to 'mount up'.



Boxing Day started with another 0400 reveille. As the railway line ended just up the road at Mersa Matruh, this move was on trucks provided by transport units. The further they went, the more the road conditions deteriorated – in order to minimise dust, speed limits were very low; yet there was still dust.

As each Coy would occupy up to 10 trucks, well dispersed on the road due to the risk of air attack, a Battalion on the move could easily stretch from one dusty horizon to the other. It was purgatory. *"We had about 105 trucks or vehicles in the convoy and that meant the Battalion was spread over 5 to 6 miles (8 to 10 km)."*

¹² With thanks to Lance Bombardier Terence 'Spike' Milligan, Royal Artillery – later of the 'Goon Show'

There's constant dust, noise, bumps and movement. The wooden slat bench seats on each side of the rear tray make you sway sideways and its cramped – there's no room to stretch legs or arms, the transport is always filled; plus webbing, packs and other stores are stacked on the floor between you. Then there's the weapons.

There's a seat next to the driver, sometimes padded, and occasionally the senior member of the group would sit there – but there's no sleep as his informal job was to 'co drive' by keeping the driver awake. More likely, the occupant stood on the seat with the hatch open manning a Bren gun as an air sentry.

It quickly became an endless, uncomfortable boredom. Some smoked, some played hands of gritty cards or stared into the middle distance, eyes and noses caked with grit. They already lacked most comforts the rest of us take for granted. Some slept – sleep was always at a premium and with nothing on, most could fall into a restless sleep with surprising speed. Whatever they did they ended up covered in dust. Every two hours there was a five-minute break. True, it did beat walking – but not by that much.

Sgt Foxwell¹³: *"The road from Mersa was literally alive with Italian guns and transports captured in those battles"*.

Departing Sidi Haneish at 0845 they absorbed the unchanging landscape, passing new Italian POW cages to halt at Buq Buq around dusk, just west of Sidi Barrani. There was much evidence of the recent battle and most observed this area with renewed interest. They were warned of booby-trapped fountain pens left by the Italians – which could easily remove an eye or several fingers. The battalion deployed into a defensive posture, ate and slept.

Into Libya

On 27 Dec they again 'mounted up', moving at first light to head further west to the Libyan border. The roads were in a complete state of decay, having been bombed, shelled and heavily trafficked with no opportunity for repair. Trucks mostly ran alongside the road to avoid the craters – making the ever-present dust far, far worse. As large clouds of dust have a habit of attracting enemy aircraft, progress was again slow. Stopping for lunch at 1330, bombs landed only 1km from where the Bn was located. By now they were near Sollum and the border.

Closer to town they halted, dispersed and waited for the expected afternoon air raid which occurred on time at 1500 – on this afternoon the *Regia Aeronautica* bombed the nearby Halfaya Pass as well as British warships in the harbor. Soon the bombers were chased off by fighters. Sgt Foxwell: *"When Sollum was bombed we all went to ground like rabbits. The fastest any of us have moved yet"*. Still waiting, Diggers watched the Royal Navy in the distance as they shelled Bardia.

From Sollum it is about 5 miles to the border via the Halfaya Pass, already becoming known as 'Hellfire Pass'. The steep winding road was the only transport route over the escarpment and was an obvious target for aircraft and artillery.

¹³ VX 5489 William Stephen Foxwell

Darkness would give protection.

The 2/7th moved off again before dusk, halting on the escarpment and being able to enjoy the great view back over Sollum.

The onset of darkness slowed the convoy to little better than walking pace in the blackout.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

MED0303

Halfaya Pass

They crossed the Libyan border at 2130 and arrived just before midnight near Fort Capuzzo, where they deployed and dug in. Cpl Matthews: *“At Fort Capuzzo we walked past the ruins and took over from the 16th British Bde sangars¹⁴. Water was a problem – one bottle had to last you all day. It was pretty brackish. We gave up washing so that was the start of the great unwashed. Up on the escarpment you couldn’t dig into the ground. We had stone sangars the pommies had built. They hadn’t done a particularly good job, so we had to build up the sides to give us some protection. When shelled we lay behind the stones and hoped that nothing would hit us”.*

Nights were very cold and there was a bitterly cold wind blowing from the West; this wind was their constant companion for the coming week. Fort Capuzzo was over 16km from the Bardia Defences, beyond artillery range and relatively secure.

The next day (28th) they moved closer to relieve 2/2nd Bn, just off the main road about 5-6km from the closest part of the Bardia wire; a dust storm concealed the Bn’s movement. Here they were within artillery range and they could see some of the fortifications.

It is a military axiom that ‘when the enemy is in sight, so are you’; the next day their presence was duly noted and they were shelled. While shells landed inside the Bn position, there were no casualties....their first experience of being shelled. Attention quickly turned to improving the pits and sangars left by the 2/2nd, but they found solid rock just beneath the surface – pits could only be around a foot deep. There would be cover enough, as long as every part of one’s body was kept as close as possible to the bottom of the pit. Once shelled, this skill came naturally.

Cpl Matthews: *“The Coys, Pls and Sects were well dispersed. Our sect had two blokes in a slit trench on the right and at about the length of a cricket pitch away would be another slit trench then another etc. If a shell hit one trench it would only kill or damage two blokes – the others would be pretty safe. We had Bren Guns on tripods set on fixed lines to protect one another.*

We dug a big arrow pointing towards Pl HQ. If you had to go there at night, you would follow the arrow, pick a star, count your steps and try to keep straight. Everyone stayed quiet and no one

¹⁴ A sangar is a defensive position built up with rocks and stones for protection, usually where digging is difficult.

gave any indication of where they were. You could wander around all night. The North Star became like your watch.

We never undressed and always slept in our boots, so we were ready to move at any time. B Coy sent out patrols every night before the attack”.

The active patrolling program commenced immediately, towards the enemy wire surrounding the fortress.

Each patrol (usually Section size) had specific areas, tasks and/or questions – sometimes as an early warning, to map enemy defences, to test enemy reactions; always to dominate the ground between them, thus allowing some freedom of movement and protection from enemy patrols. From the early stages, Italian patrol activity became rare. Patrols might move off late in the day, but the wire was approached in darkness – open terrain made all daylight movement hazardous, unless shielded from observation by the lay of the land. Navigation at night required carefully calibrated bearings and paces – there were few features to confirm location. The upside of clear and bitterly cold nights was that a star could be selected to maintain direction.

With practice the many unknowns of the night can be overcome, although few found their early experiences easy. In time, moving quietly became a habit, navigation a practiced skill, the art of using one’s senses to absorb what’s going on would glean much information. It was worth it; the cover of night offered excellent protection, plus poorly trained troops feared the night and those skilled enough to use its cloak effectively.

It was later felt the patrolling was well executed and highly effective from the start – just as they trained. Patrols rarely returned before the wee small hours and sleep became an even more prized commodity. Ian debriefed each patrol immediately upon its return and drafted a report to Bn HQ, regardless of the time it returned.

On 29 Dec there was a morning dust storm and further shelling, but still no casualties. It was still closer than wanted! Diggers soon learned to identify the different sounds incoming artillery made before impact. Most could pick ‘safe’ shells on their way to other places, from those requiring speedy access to a handy hole.

The accepted sleeping methodology was; line the floor of one’s pit with some loose sand, dig a ‘hip hole’ in the sand, cover the hole with a groundsheet if possible, using rocks, then try to stay warm. Many used their upturned helmet with a piece of clothing tucked within as a pillow. The rifle lay alongside their body and with luck this would avoid dew, to which sand would stick; it was also right there if you needed it quickly. Whether patrolling or not, one would expect ‘piquet’ or sentry duty for around 2 hours every night.

The daily water ration for each man was ½ a gallon (just over 2L) for all purposes, including shaving and washing. The water was unpleasant, either tepid and brackish (if drawn from a well) or tasting of kerosene or petrol (if brought forward in pre used cans). A large number of leather jerkins were issued in order to provide protection against the barbed wire obstacles but also to counter the intense overnight cold – this winter of 1940/41 was one of the coldest in memory.

16 and 17 Bdes were now well established in the area to the South and West of Bardia. Consistent patrol reports were combined to provide more detailed information about the defences and confirmed the enemy would not stay to fight our patrols. What 6 Div now knew of Bardia, it's surrounds, and the enemy was broadly as follows:

Bardia, Libya – Dec 1940 – Jan 1941

Topography & Weather

Topography: The area is a generally flat plateau 450-500 feet above sea level, extending to a coastal escarpment, with few identifiable features. The area comprises desert; stony sand. There is virtually no vegetation excepting some small salt bush. Bardia township is separated into two settlements and is located on the coast.

The wadis generally run east-west – most are shallow but become wider and deeper (gorge like) towards the coast; these are obstacles to tanks. Shallow wadis offer good concealment and cover from direct fire weapons – for both friendly and enemy. Otherwise there is little natural cover. Most of the defensive line is sited on gently undulating plains and a few relatively shallow wadis – the defensive posts are sited to have good fields of view and fire to their front and flanks, plus depth. Each post can fire to offer 'mutual support' to its neighbours.

To the extreme North and South of the line towards the coast are deeper wadis, with several larger wadis (Gerfan and Scemmas) – leading to Bardia township, and Wadi el Mereigha to the south. Access to Bardia township is by two roads: the Bardia-Tobruk road running to the North West, and the Bardia-Fort Capuzzo road towards the South. There is a network of tracks within the area which in the forward areas allows for servicing and supply of each defensive post.

Weather: Near freezing overnight; Cool day.
Fine and clear, wind from the west 10-15kts.
Possible dust storm.

First Light: 0553
Sunrise: 0719
Sunset: 1727
Last Light: 1854

Terrain & Enemy Fortifications

Bardia fortress is strong, generally in the style of WW1 fortifications. There is an 18-mile arc of a double row of entrenched defensive posts; sited an average of 500-700 yds apart depending upon the terrain. Each post is numbered sequentially. The outer posts are protected by an almost continuous anti-tank ditch and high barbed wire to their front; most forward posts are encircled by barbed wire and another A/Tk ditch. 500-700 yds is an ideal range for most machine guns so these gaps can be covered easily when observed.

Defensive artillery can also be called upon. All posts are sited to mutually support each other to the front, with observation out as far as 2,000 yards plus in most areas and with good fields of fire. The rear line of posts provides depth to the defensive layout, each is able to support two adjacent forward posts.

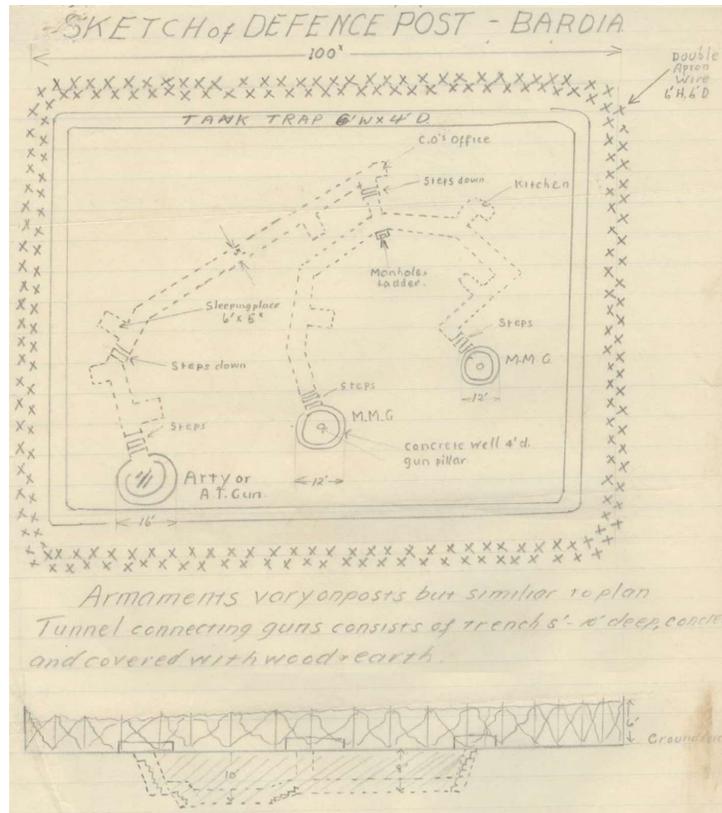


Bardia Fortress 2 Jan 1941 (Volume 1, 'To Benghazi' – Gavin Long). 2/7th Bn was located in the area where the Scale/Legend is placed

Posts are numbered from 1 to 83 and R1 to R11 – approximately 92 in total. Behind the forward posts are sited artillery positions, supporting weapons such as MMGs, plus command and administrative posts.

Each post is concrete lined and consists of an extensive deep underground shelter and three circular weapon pits which are almost flush to ground level. They provide excellent protection to all but a direct hit.

Being almost flush they are hard to see but the encircling barbed wire and tank trap provides an indication.



Typical defensive post (after battle sketch)

For attackers, an enemy putting their head up to observe or shoot is 'skylined' and an easier target. Heavy fire by attackers will tend to keep their heads down.

Most appear designed to hold a Platoon, (although some held many more). Each post has one or two 47mm A/Tk guns plus two to four machine guns.

These posts are formidable if approached from the front, with the exception that the 7RTR 'I' Tanks (Matilda) have been found to be mostly proof to the 47mm guns. Mind you, this is not particularly good for the hearing, or the crew's nerves when one hits your turret.....

The Italians are thought to have 110 artillery pieces, with more sited in the southern sector. These guns are sited in wadis or prepared positions, reasonably protected, and allow some to fire directly (Artillery is usually fired indirectly – that is adjusted onto a target by a remote observer). Some of the gun positions have not been identified by aerial or ground reconnaissance, and some artillery positions are thought to be vacant.

The defences appear strongest in the area thought most likely to be attacked; this is from the South to the South-East, approaching along the axis of the Bardia – Fort Capuzzo road axis. Note that the strongest defences, the most artillery and the best troops available are placed in the area to the South of the Bardia-Fort Capuzzo Rd.

Also to the South is the 'switch line' – posts R1 – R11; this gives additional depth to the defences sited to resist attack from the South/East. As previously noted, this position is designed along

similar lines to a WW1 defensive layout. It is very strong at the outside, uses ground well and will be very difficult to attack from any front.

Facing them, just 22 years after the end of WW1, were several senior Australian commanders and staff officers who had an accumulated experience of breaching very similar defences in France in 1918. In many aspects the methodology chosen for this attack was the fruit of that experience.

Order of Battle - Enemy

Enemy: Thought to be approximately 20-23,000 troops all up, comprising elements of:
62nd (Marmarica) Div
63rd (Cyrene) Div
64th Div
1st Blackshirt Div
Remnants of other Sidi Barrani defenders
Medium & Light Tanks
Artillery – 110 field & Anti-Tank Guns

They are thought to have varied training, morale and effectiveness, the standard of leadership at all levels is questionable and it is becoming clear that the quality and quantity of their equipment, ammunition and resupplies of all natures are relatively poor. There are some exceptions, well understood by Italian commanders who have assigned the higher quality troops to their more critical defensive tasks.

It should be noted, there was more artillery sited in the South than expected, plus higher quality troops in this area would be advantaged by knowing the planned direction of the Phase 2 assault.

Order of Battle – 6 Div

Having re captured Sidi Barrani and pursued the Italians to Bardia, Western Desert Force was due for a rest, which was why 6 Div came to be brought into the battle at Bardia.

6 Div consisted of 16, 17 & 19 Bdes however it was decided early to hold 19 Bde as a reserve so they could advance towards Tobruk if Bardia fell quickly. The initial phases of the attack were therefore planned to utilize 16 and 17 Bdes only; about 12,000 of the Div's 17,000 strength.

The attack would be supported by Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) – Royal Navy ships were to bombard the fortress from the sea, plus the RAF would engage in nightly bombing missions leading up to the attack. This would disrupt morale and cover the noise of pre attack movements.

Tanks would be critical to the assault; successful German usage of Tks against fortifications in 1940 had already been closely studied. Tank support was to be provided to 6 Div by 7 Bn, Royal Tank Regiment (7RTR). 7 RTR had participated in the ill-fated defence of France, conducting a critical counterattack near Arras before being evacuated at Dunkirk minus their tanks and equipment. Within four months they had reconstituted and re equipped with Matilda Mk II tanks, then were sent to Egypt via Cape Town.

After participating in Operation Compass so far, 7 RTR had 22 Matilda Tanks serviceable in the Sollum area by 27 Dec. Some would be used for the assault, some would be used to protect 6

Div's left (North West) flank, as well as providing a diversion in the direction of Tobruk. Three Troops of Tks (being 9 X Tks in total) were to be used in Phase 1; two troops (6 X Tks) were expected to be available for Phase 2.

The Matilda tank had relatively limited range and capacity to carry ammunition, thus needing regular resupply during battle. As fuel and ammunition are highly volatile, tanks were usually withdrawn from the immediate combat area for this procedure – requiring time and space.

For artillery, each Bde had its own artillery regiment, however they were still re equipping.



25 Pounder Field Gun in action

2/1st Field Regiment was equipped with new 25-pounders, received just that month.

2/2nd Field Regiment was still equipped with 12 X 18-pounders and 12 X 4.5-inch howitzers – both of WW1 vintage.

The 25 Pdr was considerably more powerful than the 18 Pdr and with better range.

General O'Connor's Western Desert Force had allocated its artillery to 6 Div for the attack, giving them access to an uncommonly large amount of firepower. In addition to 6 Div's own guns, they were able to use:

104 th (Essex Yeomanry) Regt, Royal Horse Artillery,	(16 X 25 Pdrs),
F Bty, Royal Horse Artillery,	(12 X 25 Pdrs),
51 st Fd Regt, Royal Artillery,	(24 X 25 Pdrs) and
7 th Mdm Regt, Royal Artillery,	(2 X 60 Pdrs), 8 X 6 in howitzers & 8 X 6 in guns.

6 Div therefore had 120 artillery guns available all up, all well stocked with approximately 125 rounds of ammunition each.

Finally, each Div usually 'owned' a Machine Gun Battalion (MG Bn), however the Australian 2/1st MG Bn had been diverted to Britain and so 1 Bn Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (1 RNF) was allocated to 6 Div. 1 RNF would provide additional close MG fire support to the attackers, using tripod mounted Vickers machine guns.

Outline Plan of Attack

On Christmas Eve, 6 Div had been 'warned out' for the task to take Bardia and preparations commenced immediately. Much of the upcoming patrolling program for the coming week was set to provide answers to the many questions posed, whilst concurrently various tactical options were evaluated, and plans developed.

While 2/7th Bn settled into operations, patrolled and dug, 6 Div were hard at work devising a detailed plan to breach the fortress and then overcome it. Whilst it was thought the Italians were generally of low morale, it is fair to say that this factor was not relied upon during preparations.

In outline, the following was the plan developed; the methodology spoke much to 1918's breaches of the Hindenburg line:

Pre-Assault – All Units

Use intense patrolling activity to gather accurate information, dominate no man's land and to deny information to the enemy.

Aggressive patrolling and probing on the Southern boundary to create an expectation of an attack from the South. (By 2/6th Bn).

Nightly NGS (HMS' Terror and Aphis) & RAF aerial bombardment in nights leading up to the attack.

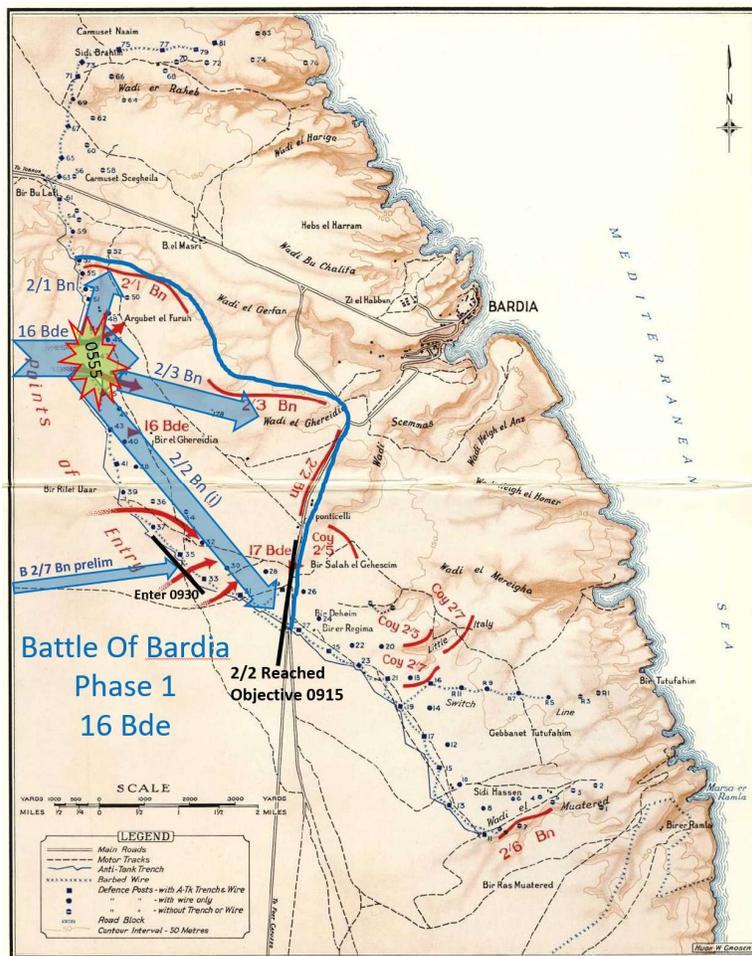
Cover preliminary deployment of tanks, artillery and stores by darkness and other noisy activity.

Phase 1 – The Break In – 16 Bde

Achieve surprise by concealing the location and identity of attacking forces plus supporting arms. Conduct diversionary activity to disguise our intentions and cause confusion.

Use the cover of darkness and a supporting barrage to approach the enemy defences. A heavy 25 min barrage by 96 guns from 0530-0555.

Concentrate forces and attack on a narrow front in the area least suited to defence; a weak point. Penetrate at the junction point of two different commands – causing more confusion. Clear and secure the break in's left flank (2/1st Bn)



Break in under cover of (more) artillery; destroy barbed wire, lift mines and deplete the anti-tank ditch in order to allow tanks to quickly enter the perimeter. Seize dominating ground in the immediate vicinity to protect the break in, and the flank. (2/3rd Bn)

Pivot (in this case to the right) and roll up the defence posts from the side, using a combination of tanks and infantry. Secure and hold a start line for Phase 2 along the Bardia-Fort Capuzzo Rd. (2/2nd Bn)

After Phase 2 commences, 2/2nd Bn moves to their left and holds part of the perimeter overlooking Wadi Scemmas.

lan's B Coy 2/7th Bn is to enter near Post 35 at 0930, coming Under Command 2/5th Bn, then move to the start line which has been secured by 2/2nd Bn in preparation for Phase 2. A Coy 2/7th Bn is to follow B Coy and will form a reserve for Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Widen the Breach – 2/5th Bn with A & B Coys 2/7th Under Command

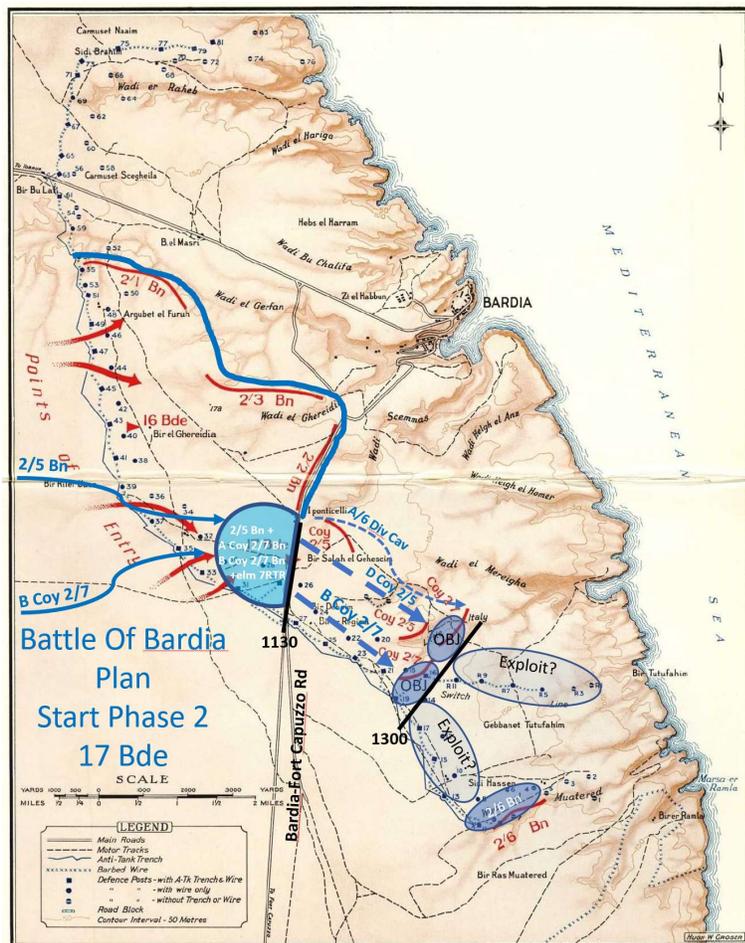
Preliminary – 2/5 Bn moves behind Phase 1 Assault to take over start line on Bardia-Fort Capuzzo Rd.

Tanks from Phase 1 will then join phase 2. A 3-hour break will allow the tanks to withdraw and replenish.

'H' Hour 1130. Phase 2 attack will be covered by a 'creeping barrage' advancing 100 yds per 3 mins.

Continue to 'roll up' the stronger sector from the flank on a broad front in order to open up and split the defence, occupy dominating ground to the rear and disable/ destroy the bulk of the En artillery.

A Sqn 6 Div Cav to provide left flank protection.



Exploit success if possible (Reserve Coys to 'leapfrog' through).

The defences will be split and Bardia itself untenable. (It is reasonable to assume that phase 2 was hoped to cause a general capitulation).

Phase 3 – ‘To Be Decided Later’

Depending upon the situation at the conclusion of Phase 2, elements of 17 Bde were to be tasked later.

Orders

A series of conferences were held for senior commanders and supporting arms (such as 7 RTR and the Artillery) between 28 Dec and 1 Jan, allowing for questions, clarifications and feedback from all. The plans were then further refined and written orders were issued from 6 Div on the afternoon of 1 Jan. These battle orders were quite prescriptive, allowing less flexibility at lower levels than was usual.

These orders were then digested by 16 & 17 brigades who then drafted and issued their own orders to battalions. Within battalions, orders were again interpreted, and more detailed specific orders issued to companies. Ian became aware of his role in the attack at least in a general sense on 1 Jan – and here we return to 2/7th Bn.

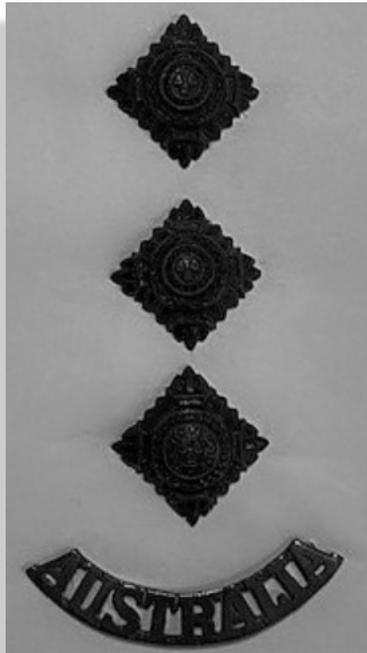
On 30 Dec there was more light shelling on the position; before midnight the whole Bn moved forward 1,000 yds and again dug in, in freezing conditions with a strong wind causing yet more dust. This new position was slightly safer as they were now located in ‘dead ground’ – due to a fold in the ground they were not directly visible from the fort. Everybody appreciated less shelling, however in return they had to put up with very noisy neighbours – they were now located adjacent to a British 6 in artillery battery (likely of 7 Mdm Regt) which steadily shelled the fort throughout the day and night. Here, through 31 Dec, B Coy continued to receive shelling however movement was kept to a minimum so enemy spotters could not see the effects of their fire.

No records sighted by the author make mention of New Year’s Eve, or New Year’s Day; there was a war on and a fight on the way. Nevertheless, thoughts again turned to home that evening under another clear, cold and starry sky as 1940 ended. Patrols were out again that evening, one moving within 20 yds of enemy soldiers, noting and recording what information they could and remaining quietly until they were able to withdraw.

Late on 1 Jan, Bn CO’s were issued a summary of the specific tasks required for the attack, and detailed preparations commenced for the battle. Diggers noted an increased tempo of activity, officers being called away to conferences while NCO’s drew stores and supervised equipment checks.

10

Up B Company, UP!



“War is the realm of uncertainty; three-quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. ... war is the realm of chance. No other human activity gives it greater scope; no other has such incessant and varied dealings with this intruder. Chance makes everything more uncertain and interferes with the whole course of events.”

Carl Von Clausewitz

“Up B Company, UP!”

The attack on Bardia Fortress was set to commence first light 3 Jan, with most participating units required to move and pre-position themselves the prior evening. Ian had to have B Coy all booted, spurred and ready to go by nightfall on 2 Jan – before they moved off.

Dawn of New Year’s Day 1941 signalled a change in identity for Western Desert Force – it became XIII Corps. Nobody noticed this, and in every other aspect life around Bardia went on unchanged. The focus of the New Year’s Day patrol tasks was the condition of tank traps and the location and design of block houses. Early that evening, Bde Orders were issued to Bns, who in turn commenced their own preparation and confirmation of orders to Coys.

This process did not go smoothly; discrepancies were discovered just prior to midnight in the orders from 6 Div to 17 Bde; requiring review and rectification the next morning. Some of the discrepancies changed B Coy’s role in the attack, so clarifications were sought and final orders were not issued by 2/7 Bn HQ until 1700 2 Jan. B Coy was again shelled during the day – we can assume the orders took at least an hour to arrive at B Coy, and/or for Ian to be briefed by ‘Myrtle’. Myrtle was struggling; he’d lost his voice.

Maj Marshall later recalled: *“.....we received orders for the preparation for the attack.*

A Coy under Russ Savage and B Coy under Sol Green were detached from us and were to attack with other Battalions. We received formal orders at a conference at Brigade and all the Coy Cdrs came in to BHQ.

Theo was late back and we finally finished about eleven o’clock Sol Green had to move his company about 1,000 yards but we had time to drink about four bottles of beer and drank good luck to each other.

Whilst we were waiting for Theo to return from Brigade Sol told us of a lucky escape he had had during the day when a shell burst about three feet from him. He also gave us each a lucky threepence from a Christmas cake he had received from home... I have kept mine with your (his wife’s) photo and I hope to bring it home...”

As part of ‘battle procedure’, every level receives orders; for commanders it’s a busy time. Ian considered, drafted and issued orders to his three PI Comds; they in turn considered their parts and issued to their three Sections each; there was likely a full Coy orders session as well. After clearing up any questions, kit was allocated, then stores and rations issued and double checked before they moved off.

There was more from Maj Marshall: *“Sol Green had to go back about midnight to his Company by a round about route of three miles and unfortunately his driver lost him. We were on the*

telephone and got a great shock when his Coy reported that he had not returned. We pictured him having been captured with orders and maps and the phone rather ran hot. I persuaded Theo to go and bed down and rest as he had improved but was not feeling too hot. I started using the phone and gradually traced Sol as having called in at 16 Bde HQ for directions.

He finally arrived back at about 2am to his show and there was a sigh of relief when I was able to report back to the Brigadier. His Company had to move into position and then make up their sleep as they had had a broken night. Not the best preparation for attacking at dawn.”



Typical dress, equipment & load – Bardia 1941

Each digger carried up to 150 rds of .303, two hand grenades, 2 X Bren Gun 30 rd magazines, five sandbags, wire cutters and rations.

Ian had decided to replace his runner, making the change that evening. VX 5862 Philip Hurst was informed he was 'it'. Pack your kit, leave your Section mates and carry your house on your back to Coy HQ. Hurst noted "Capt Green had shown in the past his leaning toward country men for their initiative and field craft". Hurst saw his selection as an honour, the digger Hurst replaced had shown he was not up to the critical role of carrying messages during the battle.

Hurst was from 52nd Bn Trafalgar where he'd been since 1938 – Ian clearly had confidence in his abilities, reliability and trustworthiness. Hurst later wrote a memoir in which he wrote simply, yet reflectively and movingly about his memories, experiences and feelings. Some observations of Ian and of the battle are his.

B Coy could have left their Bn location as early as 1815, unsurprisingly, Ian eventually led them en route to their assembly area after midnight on 2/3 Jan. Ian synchronized his watch (a critical step to ensure timings coordination) by phone with Bn HQ at 2205. A Coy moved in to replace B Coy's old position; they were to follow B Coy and also join 2/5th Bn in the morning.

Against the freezing night, each of Ian's diggers were all carrying at least 50 lbs/25 kgs of equipment and ammunition – all of this would be carried through the battle. The positioning move was a relatively short one 2,000 yds to the West of 2/7 Bn; it probably took about an hour to complete. On arrival, they spread out, dug in, posted piquets and attempted to sleep for what remained of the short night.

Sleep came hard – everybody was too keyed up. To make matters worse, during the night Bardia was bombed by RAF aircraft (Wellingtons and Bombays) – they also dropped leaflets calling on the garrison to surrender; there was more NGS, the cold wind was strong and later there were reports of water bottles freezing overnight.

Of all nights, Ian's mind would have been full of the job to come tomorrow. Going over plans, checking details; much of the success or failure to come tomorrow would depend on his plan, his conduct; his leadership. He most likely spent some time with his platoon commanders, possibly some of his nine Sections, softly discussing the day to come. Perhaps he was dealing with their questions, and his own; 'Will I be able to do my job and not flinch?', 'Will I see day's end?', 'What will the day bring?', 'Can we match up to the First AIF?'

The following thoughts would have competed with Ian's need to sleep.

Orders – B Coy's Task

We have previously described the plan in overview; the specific detail of B Coy's task was as follows:

- B Coy was to move to its assembly area on D-1, GR51043867 not before 1815 (This task was now complete)
- Zero Hour (commencement of Phase 1) was 0530. (Ian's role in Stage 2 was to come after)
- B Coy would move forward and cross bridges laid by Engrs over A/Tk trenches South of Post 35 at 0935, then come under command 2/5th Bn. The approach march was 6-7 km.
- Prior to the above move, OC B Coy (Ian) was to recon the safest possible route to the bridges for B Coy. For Ian this was a 7-8 km round trip.
- 2/5th Bn was allocated a FOO (Forward Observation Officer - Artillery) from the 6th Bty.
- B Coy had 2 X sub Sects of 2/1st Fd Coy, engineers to clear mines as they went.
- At once they were to occupy the right sector of the line on Bardia Rd from Pt 157 at GR51553905 to Rd junction GR51563912.¹⁵ They were to take over from 2/2nd Bn who should have finished their part in Phase 1 to arrive at that point.
- Originally tasked to 'await orders' at that point, B Coy was later notified from Bde that it was to form the right-hand side of the assault along the front edge of the perimeter, starting at 1130 and led by tanks. A preliminary bombardment had occurred at the time of the 16 Bde's initial attack. A 'creeping barrage' was to commence at 1125 and move forward, 100 yds every 3 mins. In order to maintain the protection of this barrage, B Coy had to maintain the same rate of advance come what may.
- B Coy's Objective was Post 18/19. The Coy on their left was to advance to the 'triangle'. If there was to be an exploitation beyond this, the Coy behind them would pass through and take over the assault.

But that was just the start of it:

¹⁵ These are grid references for locating specific points. The 'start line' is marked on the maps in this chapter.

Clearly, the tanks were a critical part of the plan. In the assault the tanks and infantry needed to cooperate – they would remain close so they could act to protect each other. Using the tank's firepower, mobility and protection to generate shock action was an efficient way to 'close the deal' and encourage a post's quick surrender. But there had been no infantry/tank rehearsals prior to the battle, so they would have to make it happen on the trot.

As they approached from the North, B Coy would find the rear posts to the left and forward posts to the right. The forward posts had the surrounding wire and A/Tk ditch. As the defensive layout was sited to repel threats from the front of the position, it was somewhat 'safer' to attack from the side. The sited weapons would be less able to effectively engage attackers and support each other; making it easier to bite each Post off, one by one.

These thoughts were overlaid with thoughts of Arthur and Kit, of Ella, Kath, Jean and Barras; the family home in Morwell, now in Gippsland midsummer to contrast with this freezing night. And of course, Jean, who he hoped to marry on his return from the war and spend the rest of his life with – there would be a difficult discussion to resolve that issue with the Greens on his return, with unknown consequences – that would have to wait. They were all so far away and yet he thought of them often – such a long journey had brought him here, but home seemed just like yesterday.

When trying to sleep on the hard ground it is usually more comfortable to lie on one's back. One can lie, stare into the dark clear sky trace the milky way shot through with endless twinkling stars and feel like one is seeing into eternity, even falling into eternity. Sooner or later, as Ian thought through the above and the day to come, sheer tiredness sent him to a fitful, cold sleep – if lucky, perhaps for two hours.

3 Jan 1941

Ian was well awake by 0500, when the night was at its finger numbing coldest. Whatever was to come, this was to be a busy day for Ian. Others recall being able to sleep in, as B Coy's part in the battle was to commence later.

At 0530 the relative darkness and quiet of the night was torn – first, flashes lit the horizon like a tropical lightning storm, followed by the thunder of 96 guns, overlaid with the swish and tear of shells passing overhead on their way to their targets. This continuous barrage on the perimeter break in point lasted 25 minutes before the guns moved to other tasks; still firing. It was intense and noisy and only the few 'old and bold' ex WW1 soldiers had heard anything like this before – it soon blanketed the area in a thin dust cloud.

The Italians responded with counter fire, adding to the noise.

Phase 1 was 16 Bde's responsibility, then some 10km to the north of B Coy. Under the barrage, 2/1st Bn moved up to the 'wire' between posts 45 and 47. At 0555, bangalore torpedoes were moved forward to blow the wire – they were slightly late, but they opened six gaps for the infantry. After 25 mins the artillery fire moved outwards towards the front, on to counter battery fire and to strongpoint neutralizing tasks. The artillery aimed to suppress enemy fire within 1500m of the break in point, being their MMG range.

The 2/1st rushed through and took Posts 45, 47 and 44. Concurrently, engineers worked to prepare the A/Tk ditches to make 6 Tk crossing points. From 0620 the artillery switched again to provide standing box barrages to protect the Tks as they entered, then again outwards onto the defensive posts to cover the coming Inf/Tk attack, which would turn towards their right (South East) towards post 27. Engineers also 'lifted' A/Tk mines, allowing the Tks to enter on time at 0650 – when there was just enough light. Phase 1 was going to plan.

Other than the noise, B Coy would have been oblivious to this activity.

Recce

First, Ian had to conduct his recce for the safest route to their Post 35 crossing point. With a small protection party – say, 2 of his runners, Ian may have taken the PI Comd of the leading PI, or that PI's leading Sect Comd with him – they would soon be 'at the pointy end' of B Coy's first move. Ian was looking for an approach covered from view and direct fire, and the shortest possible crossing of the open observed area. Clever use of the ground would save lives. To do this, observe the crossing point and return was 7-8 km. As soon as there was enough light to see, probably 0600, his small group would move quickly. Ian could stop short and observe the last, open part of their approach route from about 2km away.

Meanwhile, B Coy spent the time packing, eating (a hot breakfast was provided), consuming the rum ration (remember, teetotallers are your friends) and doing final checks. Cpl Matthews: *"We went over with our white mugs to get our rum issue from (Sgt) Foxwell. He whacked it out, an inch in the bottom of the mug for each bloke. George Sykes, who didn't drink, poured his issue into my mug so I got two lots. It was like treacle and just about blew your head off. It was like raw spirit, you couldn't get it down your throat. It was a great feeling. It made you feel nice and warm inside. I was a bit lightheaded from the rum"*.

Some may have practiced the phrases: '*Mani in alto*' (Hands Up) and '*Apri li mani*' (Open your hands). Some may not have felt very hungry at all – everybody was keyed up.

Phase 1 – The Attack Commences

Phase 1 continued, having progressed to be only 4km further north. At 0655, 2/2nd Bn passed through Post 45 and swung South East, following the tanks (1 X Tp of three Tks per Coy = 1 X Tk per PI) towards Post 43 where their work clearing posts along the front towards post 29 and Bardia Rd was to start.

Because of the distance between the front and rear defensive posts their assault was a Company task; a series of coordinated PI actions would deal with each post. A Tk charged the post to threaten the position with main armament and MG. At the same time the infantry moved up, pushed forward, section by section, supporting each other's moves by firing, until they could cut the wire surrounding each post. This was usually close enough to throw hand grenades.

Once sufficient pressure was applied, each post surrendered. It took some time to take each surrender, disarm the occupants and check the entire post before it was clear and secure. Once the threat was removed, the next post was assaulted; most posts took 15-20 mins to be subdued in this way. The advance was orderly, but far from simple. Casualties steadily grew.

A Coy 2/2nd took Posts 43-39, then B Coy 2/2nd 'leapfrogged through' to take Posts 36-33, followed again by A Coy who took Posts 31-27. The Matilda Tks proved the trump card; as soon as the Italians realized their MG and A/Tk weapons were ineffective against these Tks, surrenders began. As they progressed, 2/2nd Bn was engaged from their left front, it was becoming clear that Italian artillery was sited here on the Eastern Flank.

In approximately 2 hours, by 0915, 2/2nd Bn had cleared 16 Posts and their role was complete; they were in position on the Bardia-Fort Capuzzo Rd where they were still receiving MG and Arty fire from their left front. A later 2/2nd Bn report noted for Phase 1: *"Inspections afterwards of the strong posts along the perimeter...showed them far stronger than aerial photographs had led us to expect...It was only the moral effect of the tanks, the maintenance of the initial impetus and the great courage and dash of the Bn which carried the first phase through"*. It was clear the presence of 7RTR's I tanks had been critical to the success enjoyed so far.

On Phase 1's conclusion the tanks of 7RTR were to withdraw so they could repair, replenish ammunition and refuel in preparation for Phase 2. They only had two hours to do this and return, ready to go. Several factors caused the Tk plan to unravel as they returned for resupply, in addition to the battle damage they sustained during Phase 1.

The 'rally point' (rendezvous) was close to the initial 16 Bde entry point for the attack. This implied a return trip of approximately 20km across an area which was still not safe or secure. The tanks could not simply drive flat out from A to B. They used ground, moved carefully, paused then moved again, remembering to also dodge friendly troops, traffic and mines. It took time to carefully extract wounded crew. Some of the tanks towed disabled but still useable tanks into positions where their guns could be employed, some were used to carry wounded to the rear, some simply tried to do too much and overstayed their Phase 1 time limit.

Ian's B Coy were to continue the assault from Bardia-Fort Capuzzo Rd at 1130. The delay required to replenish the Tks meant all elements of surprise which assisted Phase 1 would be lost. The 'Phase 2' enemy had over two hours to re site their defences from the front to their flank. Now, back to Ian's recce.

Approach March to the Assembly Area

Ian and his party returned to B Coy 2/7th, a few quick words and they were on the move at 0730. As the ground was open, Ian put B Coy in 'one up' in 'open' formation, that is to say, one Platoon in front at the apex of the triangle, and two Platoons to the rear, side by side, with Ian's Coy HQ in the centre. Diggers were spread out at least 10 yds apart. 100 diggers in this formation is an impressive sight and the Coy covered up to 400 X 400 yds. It was something to see. More than one observer had the time to look around and note how the sight they made raised morale, kitted for battle and looking huge, with fixed bayonets glinting in the early sun.

CPL Matthews: *"I had never been so loaded down in my life. We were behind a rise and there wasn't much shell fire coming onto the reverse slope. I suppose it had been chosen for that*

reason¹⁶. We had 20 yards between each man and 40 yards between sects. There seemed to be a great body of men all over the desert; the whole desert seemed to be alive with men walking”.

During this move, B Coy came under arty fire. Nerves prevailed; it was noted ‘everybody needed to stop for a nervous wee’. Having advanced Northwards for 5,000 yds, back from the skyline and out of sight, B Coy wheeled to the right and crested, then descended the shallow slope towards to the wire. Now they could be seen and accurate artillery fire started to fall amongst them; it steadily became heavier, with shells falling all around.

One shell fell close between CPL Matthews and another – they both dived for the ground. SGT Foxwell quickly arrived saying “You fellows get up. You’re attacking, you don’t go to ground. Walk through it!”



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

069221

Australian Infantry at Bardia, morning 3 Jan 1941

‘So, there was no more going to ground. We trudged through it with all these bloody things going off around us.’

Previous days under fire taught B Coy to identify different artillery by noise; they learned the enemy arty was less effective than expected and also of poor quality – on top of this, it was estimated that up to two out of every 10 rounds that fell amongst them were ‘duds’.

Many were seen to be knocked over by shell blasts, only to regain their feet and continue. By the time they arrived inside the perimeter, their contempt for the arty had grown. They could identify their own 25 Pdrs by noise and they noted their far improved destructive effects.

As Ian approached the perimeter wire, he saw a ‘scene like a war movie’ – 110 soldiers of B Coy advancing in open formation through smoke and dust, shells bursting amongst them and bayonets glinting. Some found they could break their inner tension by vocalizing, so they yelled. Diggers were going down but then getting up again and continuing the advance, with formation and spacing maintained. In their greatcoats and leather jerkins, they looked huge. Some recalled feeling very proud. Ian was busy ensuring B Coy’s direction, spacing, formation and pace was maintained – so he saw all of this encircling him as they moved forward.

At 0814, 2/5th Bn started to enter through Post 39, to the North, taking just over 45 mins to pass through. As a result of a transport mix up and some conflicting orders, they had endured two long marches with only two hours’ overnight rest. They paused in the vicinity of Post 36 whilst their CO (Maj Wrigley) went forward for a final recce.

At 0930 Ian and B Coy arrived at Post 35 still under shell fire, passing it to the South through the (now blown) barbed wire, then crossing the A/Tk ditch (now bridged), on time at 0935. As they crossed the wire there were several bodies to their left; a shell had landed nearby and it was not

¹⁶ Ian had chosen their route for exactly this reason!

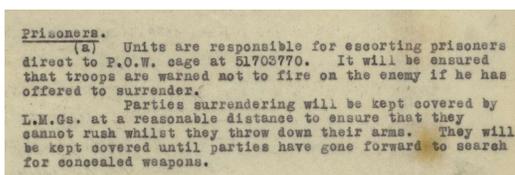
possible to identify them. Searching for signs of life, Ian observed them for some time through his binoculars, then turned and offered the binoculars for Hurst to take a look. *“He was that type of officer”*. Hurst did the same but quickly had to catch up as Ian was again moving forward *“at his usual rapid pace”*.

From here they came under command¹⁷ 2/5th Bn. Once clear of the wire, B Coy wheeled right and advanced between the front and rear rows of posts, carefully noting their construction and siting as they passed so they would be prepared for what they would soon face. This area was quieter, being in ‘dead ground’ to enemy observation, but everywhere was evidence of recent heavy fighting. Wounded or dead diggers had been removed promptly, leaving their webbing and equipment where they fell. Enemy dead were left where they fell – to be removed and buried when circumstances permitted. Bodies and equipment surrounded B Coy.

They passed a young soldier sitting, who was gently nursing the head of another wounded soldier – he said it was his brother. To B Coy diggers, he appeared already dead, but nobody had the heart to say it. As the ground started to rise, a large crowd appeared to their left; they realised with relief it was an approaching party of enemy prisoners. As the artillery continued to fall amongst them, 2/7th Bn suffered its first KIA of the war; VX15817 Pte Matthew Colwell. On the move and under fire, if he was ‘gone’, one of his ‘dog tags’ was removed, the other was left with the body and they kept moving. He would be collected by stretcher bearers following up.

As B Coy moved the 2,000 yds along the perimeter towards the Bardia Rd start line, they remained threatened by fire from the left flank where there was ground dominating the approach with good visibility. B Coy was under enemy observation and accurate artillery fire was sent in their direction. Approaching Bardia Rd this fire intensified and there would have been many more casualties had the Italian ammunition been of better quality.

Close to the rear of the assembly area¹⁸, a medical treatment post was being established, most likely in the safer ‘dead’ ground passed by B Coy – they were already using captured Italian doctors to assist treatment.



CPL Matthews recalled meeting some fellows from 2/2nd Bn on the start line having completed their phase of the attack. One told him *“Watch the dagoes, they’ll put their hands up and then they’ll be throwing grenades in your face. Don’t trust the bastards”*.

Orders for the battle alluded to this possibility:

Shaking Out

The very first place one looks for information regarding a unit’s role in a battle is to read its War Diary. Unfortunately, the 2/7th Bn war diary sheds little light on B (and A) Coy 2/7th’s activities, as

¹⁷ 2/5 Bn has full control and assumes full responsibility for B Coy 2/7. CO 2/5 Bn became Ian’s ‘boss’ for the duration.

¹⁸ An area behind the start line where the attackers ‘shake out’ and await the assault.

they were detached at Bardia. 2/5th Bn, who had them under command, did not record their detailed activities either – instead focusing on their own four Coys' activities. This is excusable given the temporary attachment and the torrid nature of the 2/5th's battle to come – they became fully focused on their left flank, and after all B Coy's presence was only short term – but it does not assist in reconstructing the battle.

B Coy approached the slightly higher ground close to Bardia Rd which was to form their start line for Phase 2. They took over this section of the line at approx. 1000 from 2/2nd Bn, still in location since their morning assault; they were to remain here until Phase 2 commenced. The start line was approximately 1,000 yds long; Ian placed two PIs forward and one back to allow the width of the defences to be covered by the attack, with the flexibility to use the rear PI if required. Each PI had 2 X sect forward and one back.

During the final advance to the start line, B Coy was held up by Artillery and MMG fire from the direction of post 26, on the other side of the road. The artillery from their front and left front became heavier. 2/5th Bn had scheduled a final CO's confirmatory orders group at 1030 with their CO Maj Wrigley, however he was wounded at 1020 on return from his recce so Maj Sell took command. Sell now had to his own quick recce; Ian was unable to join him due to the heavy shellfire.

B Coy and Ian spent about 90 mins here awaiting to commence their assault; all the while under fire. One imagines many conversations with counterparts in the 2/2nd about their conduct of the recent battle.

Some areas offered better cover and Ian rearranged B Coy to move his rear PI (exposed and under fire in the open), to a safer location, sending Hurst and another runner with his instructions. On Hurst's return, Ian again passed his binoculars, identifying a standing enemy also with binoculars, who was obviously directing their artillery. Hurst passed the binoculars back, took careful aim and shot him. Ian congratulated Hurst on a fine shot – having observed the result. The shelling seemed to slow after this.

These above instances show Ian was careful to preserve his diggers from unnecessary danger, yet hardening his heart enough to give the *one* task to *two* runners – clearly, he expected one may not return. It was a close-run thing – Hurst returned from this task with a shrapnel gash in his rifle butt and his rifle sling almost cut. Ian had retained his cool, having the presence of mind to actively manage his part of the battle and taking actions to protect his diggers which likely saved some lives. Ian was well in control of himself and his command.

Before the Battle there was disagreement as to where the enemy artillery was located in this sector. 6 Div staff believed a number of the gun positions in the area were vacant; only 17 Bde's Brig Savage thought otherwise. It became apparent there were enemy guns on Ian's left flank (marked as 'vacant' on the map), sited to cover the most likely approach along the Bardia Rd. They were well located with good fields of fire covering the road approach, including posts 23-26 which B Coy was just about to assault.

"We spent some hours in the assembly area under artillery fire and smaller field guns". They now lay and awaited the Tks arrival – Ian expected three overall; 1 Tk to lead each PI through the

assault. On occupying the assembly area with 2/2nd Bn, one expects Ian consulted their leaders to discuss and confirm the most effective methodology to employ against the posts. To their left on the start line was D Coy 2/5th – who were to parallel Ian’s assault towards their objective ‘The Triangle’. Still under fire from the left, they too awaited ‘their’ Tks.

Formed up ready for the attack we have Ian’s B Coy on the right and D Coy 2/5th on his left. Behind Ian was B Coy 2/5th (Maj Starr) with C Coy 2/5th (Capt Griffiths) to their left. A Coy 2/5th was to follow D and C Coys, with A Coy 2/7th remaining here in reserve. To Support the assault, 1 PI, 1RNF (MG Bn) was to provide MMG (Vickers) Spt from the assembly area.

The 2/5th’s part in the attack will not be covered in detail – see the Official History for that. Suffice to say, Ian expected to see D Coy 2/5th on his left side for the duration of the assault.

All had gone more or less to plan so far. Then, shortly before the attack was to commence, 2/5th’s HQ informed Ian the tanks had not returned from their resupply and the attack would continue as planned without them. This was a setback. The fight for each post would take longer and likely become more costly. The premise for the artillery fire plan timings was now gone.

Despite this – the attack was to continue as planned – nothing could be done now. By now Ian would know just how critical the tanks’ presence would be. Ian sighed and swore quietly; this was a very good time for a smoke. He passed this information on to his PI commanders and checked his watch again. Ian had to lead his men with confidence, regardless of the situation.

As leader, he could not show any weakness or worry.

Phase 2

The 2 hour pause also allowed other units with key roles supporting the infantry to ‘re set’ – Artillery in particular.

Phase 2 was preceded by an intense 5 minute bombardment, commencing at 1125. Right on time, down it came; everybody heard – felt – the rolling concussion of the barrage. Here to their front the effectiveness of the 25 Pdr was demonstrated. The curtain of explosives was linear across their front, about 150-250 yds in front of the prone troops – this was the ‘safety distance’ from exploding shells. After the bombardment, fire would shift to each post in turn, in accordance with carefully calculated timings, for a planned rate of advance of 100 yds per 3 mins. Recorded longhand, this fire plan was not one for changing – tanks or no tanks. There was some luck in the wind direction; it was blowing the dust away from them and tending to inhibit the enemy’s observation.

Most soldiers who had been lying under the artillery fire for some time felt relatively safe and would find it a real challenge to get up again. Ian and his PI Commanders were aware this would happen; they watched their diggers carefully, motioning them to get ready to go. Ian checked his watch again.....

1129:30 The last 14 Months led to this moment. It was impossible to hear much over the unspeakable din, but Ian could feel his heart pounding, feel it in his temples and hear his own breath.....Five, 4, 3, 2..... **Up B Coy, UP!** Ian must be first on his feet and he used his voice, hoping

to cut through the din, and hand signals to get B Coy up; as long as they got up, they'd all move. Ian's PI commanders kept an eye on their watches, saw Ian and also rose. Accepting or ignoring their chance of fate, with them rose the 100 diggers of B Coy whom Ian had prepared for just this moment.

As they rose and advanced towards the fire; nerves steadied slightly. Some were keen to get close to the barrage as they knew it was safer for them – enemy heads remained down while it fell on them and when the shells moved on, they would have to close the gap quickly. Some diggers had to be held back lest they got too close to 'friendly fire'. The enemy artillery continued from the left, even stronger, and a steady tap-tap-tap started from the rear – this was 1 NF's Vickers guns supporting B Coy's advance. Good on those pommies; they later received high praise for their support.

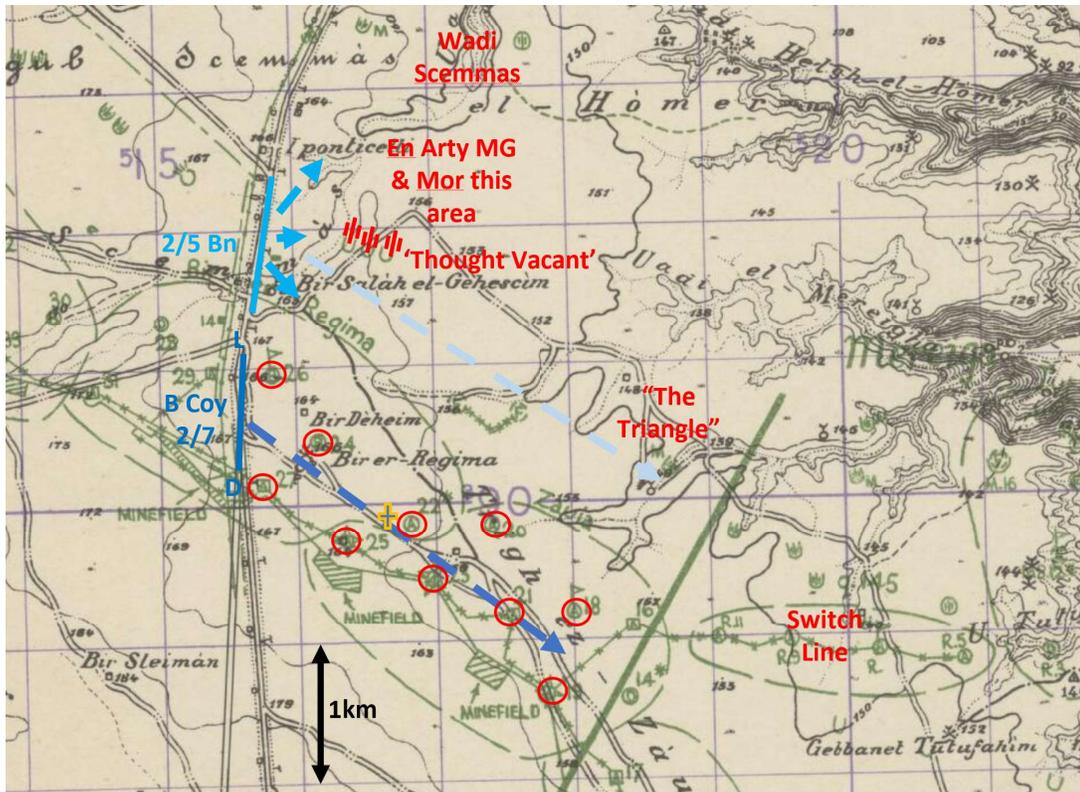
On Ian's front left was Lt Syd Evensen's 10 PI; they were to tackle Post 26 first. The lay of the ground and the defences made this attack a series of coordinated PI actions. A PI used its 3 sections to 'leapfrog' by using fire and movement to get close to the post. If there was wire, it had to be cut before a break in could be made, and grenades used. Ian co-ordinated the Company but remained clear to allow his PI commanders to do their jobs.

Under heavy shell and MG fire from Post 26, Evensen's PI closed in on it; the enemy defence remained resolute until the attackers worked close enough to throw hand grenades (20 yds), then the post surrendered. Being on the left, they also had to deal with the large volume of fire still coming from that flank. In the process, Evensen was WIA *"OC 10 PI had been hit by a piece of shrapnel as soon as he walked over the road"*, and whilst successful, their progress was noticeably slower than planned. Evensen's PI Sgt took over the PI and they quickly reorganized, ready to continue.

Hurst noted around this time: *"Things were hot – the barrage got ahead (of us) and moved slowly into the distance.....not to be caught up with"*. Already without tanks, B Coy was now without artillery support. Also of concern to Ian, there was no evidence of any 'friendlies' on their left flank as expected, indeed still very heavy enemy fire coming from that direction. Having a flank exposed was a vulnerability which became a growing problem for Ian – the further they advanced, the more exposed the flank would become.

Ian knew the 2/5th was being held up, but not how badly. In fact, their assault went nowhere for a long time. The 2/5th's attack started late due to the change of CO – having taken over command 'on the run', Maj Sell had to quickly perform his own recce and get a grip on his command. When the 2/5th crossed the start line, they were immediately and heavily engaged from the left by artillery shelling – they quickly became pinned down and eventually had to pivot left to clear the guns, MG & Mortars in that quadrant – a complex series of actions that took until approx. 1430. They suffered heavy casualties in the process. For most of the time 2/5th Bn was involved in this heavy fight it appears there was little to no communications to or from B Coy.

The same guns were also causing problems for Ian, however the 2/5th, being closer suffered worst and had to deal with them before they could advance. Eventually captured on this flank by 2/5th Bn were 16 X fd guns, 30 X A/Tk guns, 60 X MGs and 2,500 prisoners. The gun positions were the ones thought to have been vacant.



After this, the Reserve Coy – Capt Savige’s A Coy 2/7th was brought forward to perform the original task of clearing towards the triangle, which they completed albeit much later in the afternoon.

While Evensen’s 10 PI reorganized, the other two PIs advanced through to attack the next two posts (24 & 27) simultaneously. Lt Davis’ 11 PI took on post 27 on the right, Lt ‘Spider’ Webb’s 12 PI on the left captured post 24. They both used the same methodology as before; Ian and his Coy HQ remained roughly in the centre between the two, where he could see both and coordinate the fights. In addition to the artillery fire, enemy machine gun fire was coming from each post and shells appeared to be ‘skidding knee high’.

Here, Lt ‘Cec’ Davis and several of his diggers were also wounded; SGT Foxwell, his PI Sgt took over command and the show went on. Matthews noted: *“At Post 27 Old ‘Cec’ (Davis) hadn’t moved fast enough. He was hit (Shrapnel wound to shoulder) and went spinning around like a shot rabbit. Foxwell became the Platoon commander. Solomon (Sect Comd) became the PI Sgt and I became Sect Comd. This was all fixed up in about 5 minutes”.*

SGT Foxwell noted in his diary: *“Under heavy fire and MG from this post (27) Lt Davis got one in the shoulder (Shrapnel from rear – sticking out, which they removed and dressed). Took Post 27. This leaves me in charge, under orders of Capt Green”.*

After Post 27 surrendered, Enemy POW were disarmed, searched and sent to the rear under guard. 30 to 50 soldiers emerged from each post. For the volume of fire being put up, Australian casualties remained surprisingly low; some Italians became convinced the leather jerkins they wore were bullet proof.

At Post 24, 12 PI was still receiving heavy artillery fire from the left, as well as MG fire from front & left rear where 2/5th Bn was held up – some of the guns fired at B Coy over open sights, but Ian kept the assault moving.

B Coy now prepared to take posts 22 & 25. Post 22 had to be taken first by 10 PI as fire from it would cause serious problems for those assaulting post 25. As they left post 24, two tanks caught up from out of the blue; better late than never! A brief talk to the tank commander gave them the news; both tanks were low on fuel and ammunition, but they would stay with B Coy as long as they could. Good on those Pommies!

The downside to this good news was that the tanks attracted yet more artillery and A/Tk fire. But the tanks immediately made their presence felt. The assault on post 22 went noticeably faster, the infantry closed and with the approach of the tank, the white flags appeared. This was an improvement; things were looking up. Unfortunately, during the assault, the last remaining PI Comd, Lt 'Spider' Webb received a severe shrapnel wound to his leg¹⁹.

It was now approx. 1300-1330. Ian was still in the area between the forward and rear posts with his HQ, coordinating & managing the fight. In Morwell it was around last light, 2100-2130, the evening of 3 Jan 1941, three days before Jean O'Halloran's birthday.

With the surrender of post 22, Ian moved towards the post, possibly to review the action with the PI and Tk commanders. Hurst was just 5 yds behind Ian; they arrived as the prisoners were emerging from the trench with their hands raised. *"I saw a man raising his rifle and tried to get my rifle off my shoulder and into a firing position, but I was too late."* The man shot Ian from about 25 yds away. *"The shot went through Captain Green's gas respirator cannister and into his solar plexus. He was knocked over backwards onto the ground and did not move. It was maddening. I saw it happening yet could not do anything to prevent it as I was carrying my rifle in the slung position and the incident only took a couple of seconds. Several of our men fired but too late to save our Captain. After he fell, we tried to help, even making an Italian Medico try but all we could do was dress the wound in his stomach. There was a lot of charcoal in and around the wound (gas cannister contents) but not much bleeding. When Captain Green fell, I went to inform Lt Macfarlane that he (Wadi Mac) was now Company Commander. By the time we returned together Captain Green had been taken away by stretcher bearers. We later heard that he had died without regaining consciousness".*

SGT Foxwell: *"Attacking two posts at the same time. Captured the one on the right and the centre post surrendered (22) and as the Capt was walking up one bloke shot him in the stomach. Lt Webb also got bad shrapnel wounds and later lost the leg. Evensen also wounded here so within 5 mins four B Coy officers are gone. This leaves only Lt Macfarlane and I practically leading the Coy from now.*

¹⁹ The leg was later amputated.

The Capt passed out at 4pm²⁰ and the boys have sure got their backs up as a whiter man you could never meet”²¹.

CPL Matthews: *“10 Pl captured a post on our left (Post 22). ‘Sol’ Green was walking over to see what was happening when one of the Italians picked up a rifle and shot him right through the middle of the chest. When I walked past him, he was blue in the face. Obviously, he couldn’t breathe, and he died. There was a hell of a dust up there. Someone wanted to kill all the dagoes with a Bren gun but somehow it was stopped and we sent the prisoners back.*

Poor old Captain Green was dead. He was a great fellow and everyone was fond of him”. Chris Matthews later quoted VX5535 CPL Charlie Bramley: “Captain Green was very highly regarded by members of B Coy”. He described it as ‘murder’. “Capt Green walked up to the post with his hands by his sides and was then shot”.

Maj Marshall: *“Sol was unfortunately shot in the stomach and died almost instantaneously.....It cast a gloom over all the Bn when we received the news as he was wonderfully popular. It enraged his own show and they never let up.”*

Who can say what was on this man’s mind when he shot Ian? Was it deliberate or a mistake? Was he wounded, concussed, shell shocked, vengeful, misguided or stupid? Had *his* brother just died in his arms; did he want revenge? It is all now lost in the fog of war. We’ll never know the answers – only that Ian stood out as a commander, and at 25 yds it is difficult to miss. Another life ebbs away in war’s running tide. In war, tragically, these things happen.

Hurst: “Captain Green was a very capable and popular commander and his death was a blow to us all. It hardened our attitudes towards the enemy.”

Hurst’s feelings ran deep, but he chose to be euphemistic about the aftermath of Ian’s death, most likely to protect his comrades. Ian’s diggers knew the line had been crossed and they felt robbed. They understood the dangers of war and were, for the most part reconciled to risk their lives. They knew lives would surely be lost, but in the cut and thrust of battle, the white flag is well and consistently respected, providing protection in return for surrender. This was simply *not fair*.

It was another year before these rules came to be routinely breached by the Japanese.

Hurst continues: *“The man who fired that fatal shot while under the protection of a white flag forfeited the right to be treated as a prisoner.”* Immediately, an enraged Bren Gunner²² shot the enemy soldier and probably several others, no doubt using all remaining ammunition in his 30-round magazine. Hurst notes a few others firing in response; it is likely there were several lives taken in an immediate and almost reflexive action by several diggers.

²⁰ The author believes closer to 1400

²¹‘Play the white man’ To be decent and trustworthy in one's actions. Refers to the personal moral obligation English civil administrators in late years of the Empire considered themselves under. Due to racial connotations the term is no longer used.

²² CPL Matthews made a note in his official history *“Roberts 10 Platoon”*. This may be VX1394/VX700023 Kenneth Richard Roberts. Note previous mention in the orders regarding using an MG to ‘cover’ the disarming process.

Quickly, anger set in. Macfarlane was met with a completely incandescent group full of shock, disbelief, anger; grief. They wanted revenge and demanded that the remaining POWs be bayoneted. Known as a quiet man, 'Wadi Mac' Macfarlane asserted his first order as OC B Coy and forbade it. He was obeyed; not willingly, but he was obeyed. Picture the scene, the raw emotion, the shock, sorrow and desire for vengeance; the angry mob wanted a lynching and this may well have gone either way.

Picture Wadi Mac, feeling just like his diggers, in the heat of the moment and at the height of his emotions, quickly choosing right from wrong, standing alone and then taking immediate, firm and authoritative steps to ensure his will was understood and carried out. Here, too was leadership. Macfarlane's actions as a result of Ian's death were later the subject of a section in an Army leadership publication on 'moral leadership'.

Having witnessed this, the Italians in post 25, some 500 yds away, were so affected by the turn of events that they immediately sent an English-speaking emissary, then surrendered without firing another shot.

Ian was evacuated by stretcher bearers, still under fire, most likely to the 2/5th RAP previously passed about 1km behind the assembly area. This facility was typically a place for dressings and triage, severe cases would be sent further back for proper treatment. It is unlikely that Ian was still alive when he arrived. In the busy, brutal world of a Bn RMO in battle, capacity is severely limited. The wounded were assessed as not-so-severe, severe, or hopeless. Those assessed unlikely to survive would be made as comfortable as possible and provided morphine only if conscious.

And then, of course, there was a war on and B Coy had to continue – Hurst again: *"B Coy had now lost four of its five officers but carried on with Sergeants and a Corporal in charge of the Platoons. They didn't miss a beat. Our casualties were heavy, but the attack went on as before. We lost men at almost every post we took; two men being killed when a shell burst between them while they were moving too closely together."*

Sgt Foxwell: *"Every man, now a veteran and advancing under heavy fire. Nothing can stop them"*.

As trained, B Coy quickly reorganized, shook out again and continued with the assault. With the tanks, they took Post 23 followed by Post 20. By that time, one tank had lost a track, and the other had to return to refuel. Stopping again to reorganize, Maj Starr's B Coy 2/5th Bn appeared on their left – the first 'friendlies' seen since the attack began. B Coy pushed on further and captured Posts 21 and 18 by approx. 1630. By now B Coy was down to 65 diggers, having captured 8 posts and widening the breach by some 2,500 yds.

After several efforts they were unable to capture Post 16 by nightfall, so they halted there for the night. This effectively completed the task Ian and B Coy had been set to achieve on that day.

They were exhausted. At midnight they were again ordered to continue the advance, changing the axis of their attack to the Switch Line.

They took Posts 16 and R11 in night attacks, before becoming misplaced in the darkness – Ian had the only compass in B Coy, and in the haste it was left behind with his body.

At dawn they attacked and took Post R9 and were then instructed to not move during daylight. They spent the day of 4 Jan in this location under cover and were withdrawn on 5 Jan.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P00643.007
BARDIA, LIBYA, GROUP OF SOLDIERS FROM 2/7 BN AIF AFTER THE BATTLE AROUND BARDIA ROAD.

B Coy had fought itself to a standstill after capturing 11 posts, with little effective support from tanks or artillery, in a sector held in more strength than anticipated, with more artillery and by better quality troops. They benefited from no surprise and little concealment. In general, the enemy fought hard – they only surrendered when the outcome of the fight was beyond question.

CPL Matthews: *“We went for about 48 hours with almost no food or sleep. B Coy was down to about 60 men. About thirty fellows from B Coy had been killed or wounded in the battle”.*

It is arguable that B Coy 2/7th Bn had drawn the most difficult task for Phase 2 of the attack, and its successful outcome was very much Ian’s legacy. Just 5 days later, 6 Div commenced preparations for the advance to Tobruk.

The barefoot dog loving boy, the friend and befriended, the young man with the full and busy life, the trusted banker, the gregarious organiser and arranger; the sportsman, the giver, the lover. That man in the photo with just a hint of a smile from Morwell left many footprints, some still clearly defined after all these years. Ian made his mark and touched many lives for the better, but Ian was dead. He had chosen the life of a part time soldier, then was first to answer the call of the bugle²³ when it came. He fought and died a soldier and it is clear enough that he did not suffer.

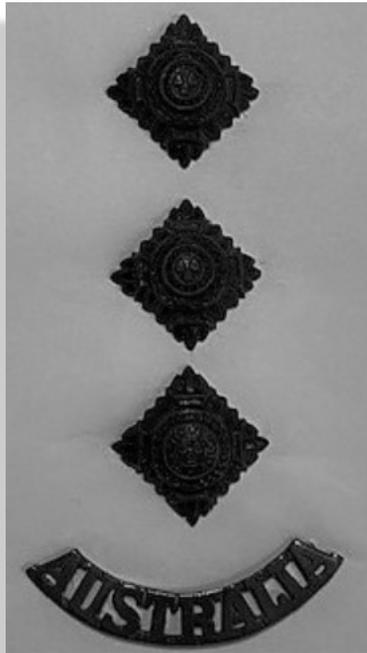
After the battle the Bn Padre buried him, as planned for the dead in a re purposed tank trap in the company of his comrades from the battle and he was later re interred at the Halfaya-Sollum War Cemetery where he lies today.

Ian fully understood the risks and realities of war and had contemplated and accepted his chance of an early death. He had died in battle whilst performing his role fully, competently and bravely enough. He died with his face to the foe, however in circumstances nobody would have foreseen, least of all Ian.

²³ *At the call of the bugle, and the roll of the drum / With the bold front of heroes, our trained Rifles come, All marshalled and marching to strains that inspire / And fan in each bosom the true martial fire. “British Volunteers” by Janet Hamilton*

11

Aftermath



“How can you measure the real cost to Australia of all those talented people who would have become Prime Ministers and premiers, clergy men, engineers, teachers, doctors, poets, inventors and farmers, the mayors of towns and the leaders of trade unions and the fathers of another generation of Australians”
Geoffrey Blainey

“...Maybe the problem lies in the fact that in war time one does not get the chance to say farewell to a friend. He goes down and you move on. I still wish I could have said a last ‘Goodbye’; if not to ‘The Skipper’, to his face, then by his graveside. A funeral closes the book; I now realise that the book will never be closed for me.”
VX5862 Philip John Hurst – Ian’s runner 3 Jan 1941

Aftermath

Armies are structured and trained to keep going in the event of the incapacitation or death of any key person. It can be time of maximum risk, so momentum must be maintained. If not, an opposing force can exploit delays or sense a loss of resolve. So, the show went on, they didn’t stop.

AIF units in both wars quickly became like Grandfather’s axe – after some use, having had three handles and two heads, it was still Grandfather’s axe. So, Ian’s story remains intertwined with the 2/7ths well after Bardia.

We will briefly explore the aftermath.

KIA or DOW?

Ian’s record contains an anomaly. The following entries were made to his personal file:

Date of Entry	Occurrence	Date of Occurrence
12 Jan 41	<i>Killed in Action</i>	4 Jan 41
17 Jan 41	<i>Died of Wounds. Previously reported Killed in Action – now reported Died of Wounds.</i>	4 Jan 41
11 Mar 41	<i>Previously reported Died of Wounds 4 Jan 41 – now reported Killed in Action</i>	3 Jan 41

Firstly, the date was incorrect. Based on the recollections of those present, it is not likely that Ian was still alive at the time his body was delivered to the RAP on the afternoon 3 Jan. The trail of administrative errors may stem from the incorrectly recorded date of death (4 Jan) however in the second AIF’s first battle of WW2, inexperience or a simple error may have contributed to this mix up.

KIA denotes those who have died on the battlefield, whilst DOW denotes those wounded who survive long enough to reach a medical treatment facility before dying. Matthews notes Ian as turning blue, indicating asphyxiation; at best Ian’s wound may have allowed him to linger unconscious for a time before he died. In 1941 in the Western Desert, the chest wound he suffered would be classed as terminal during triage and he would not receive treatment. He would

not have lingered as long as 4 Jan. The final entry of 11 Mar was made by 2/1st Field Ambulance which implies they investigated and corrected the records.

Most unhappily, the two administrative 'changes of status' after Ian's death resulted in two further heart wrenching telegrams being delivered to the family after the first was received.

Ian was the first officer of 2/7th Bn to be KIA in WW2.

'Wadi Mac'

By the time of Ian's death, all three Pls had lost their commanders; every time the relevant 2IC stepped up. Lt Macfarlane stepped in as OC B Coy, immediately took control of a near mutinous situation and then re-commenced the assault such that by day's end, the original mission had been achieved. This says much for the quality of communications and the levels of training at every level.

VX5545 Lt Charles William 'Wadi Mac' Macfarlane was awarded the MC for his actions that day. His citation reads: *"Lieut Macfarlane's company commander was killed, and he then led the company with skill and dash. By nightfall he was the only officer remaining in B Company. He was ordered to capture in succession, 3 posts in the enemy's most strongly defended sector. The confidence which Lieut Macfarlane inspired in his men enabled this task to be completed beyond expectations. Throughout the action he showed courage and resource to a high degree in using captured enemy weapons to subdue stubborn resistance."*

One year prior to the Battle, 'Wadi Mac' was a Cpl. He was a quiet and somewhat introverted man; indeed, so quiet that on the eve of battle Ian had approached 'Myrtle' to discuss his concerns about Macfarlane's ability and leadership potential as an officer. Ian was persuaded, as 'Wadi Mac' had not yet been tested, he should be given a chance. Brig Savige later commented, 'you can't judge a banana by its skin'.

Hurst commented: *"Lt Macfarlane was not a polished officer type which was probably why he missed promotion, but he held the friendship and respect of all troops and it seemed to me that (was) the all-important thing. Not many officers were regarded as both a leader and a friend. Captain Green was such a man also. One never hesitated to salute either of them no matter where you met them"*.

'Wadi Mac' continued to the Greek campaign and again commanded B Coy there as a Lt. After returning to Australia, in Nov 1942 he was posted to 37/52nd Militia Bn as a Company Commander, was promoted Maj and served in New Guinea, remaining until the end of the war. He chose to settle in New Guinea, staying with the CMF and serving in New Guinea Infantry Bn. He died aged 49 in 1957.

VX5629 Lt Syd Evensen was carried to shelter under fire by LCpl T Fennessy. Promoted Capt, he remained in 2/7th Bn. He returned to Australia, was discharged 25 Sep 1945 and returned to WA, later living in Myaree, where he died in 1982.

VX4603 Lt Cecil Davis, having been secretary of Wentworth Hospital and serving in the Militia, married before embarkation. He was discharged in Oct 1944 and died in 1974.

VX9493 Lt Frank Cooper 'Spider' Webb of Newport was reported as WIA & seriously ill; his leg was amputated as a result of his wound. Previously working at the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works in a manual role, this was life changing. He died in 1974.

VX5489 Sgt William Stephen George "Bill" Foxwell took over from Lt Davis and was awarded the MM for his leadership during the battle. As a WO2 he was captured on Crete, spending the remainder of the war as a POW in Stalag 383 Hohenfels Germany.

Bill had been commissioned in the field after the North Africa campaign (6 Mar 41) but the paperwork had not caught up. He took up his Commission, remaining in the UK after being released until Aug 45 at a transit camp. He returned to Australia in 1945 but died in 1947.

VX5862 LCpl Philip Hurst received a shoulder wound on Crete, and was evacuated, so missed becoming a POW. Having difficulty carrying a pack, he became an Anti-Aircraft Gunner, returned to Australia in 1942 then served in New Guinea. Married before discharge in 1945, he died in 2016, aged 98.

His memoirs, plus those of Allan Matthews and Bill Foxwell are held at the AWM.

VX5175 Corporal Allan Ernest Matthews Originally from Geelong was promoted Cpl in Dec 40 before the battle. When Sgt Solomon took over as Pl Sgt to replace Foxwell at Post 27, Matthews became Sect Comd and was slightly wounded. He remained with 2/7th until Crete where he was captured, spending the remainder of the European war as a POW at Oflag IIIc.

He returned to Australia in 1945 to live in Warrnambool VIC, married Jill in 1947 and dictated his memoirs to his son Chris in the early 1980's. He died in 1989.

VX34 Major Henry Charles David Marshall was captured on Crete with the Bn and spent the remainder of the war in a POW camp. He was awarded a DSO for his role in the Battle of Crete and returned to Australia in 1945. He died in 1971.

VX32 LtCol Theodore Gordon Walker's reputation grew steadily throughout the desert campaign. After Tobruk he was selected to attend Senior Officers' Tactical Course which would lead to promotion to Brigadier, but he deferred this to continue as CO 2/7th Bn for the Greek campaign.

As the unsuccessful defence of Crete finished, 2/7th Bn acted as the rearguard to protect and secure the evacuation beach. On the final day, the evacuation was suspended due to shipping losses and the ever-increasing risk. Myrtle stepped off an evacuation vessel at the last moment when he realized that most of his 400 remaining men would be left behind. He would not leave without them.

He was captured but escaped for several days until retaken, then transferred to a series of POW camps in Greece and Germany until their release in Apr 1945. 'Myrtle' was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his role during Bardia; he was later Mentioned in Dispatches (MiD) for the Greece/Crete campaigns.

After the war he joined Richardson Gears Pty Ltd, a family company, as Sales Manager, becoming Managing Director of Sonnerdale Richardson David Brown (Vic.) Pty Ltd. In 1955 he purchased a

dairy farm at Coldstream, Victoria, and later grazing properties near Kyneton. He stayed active in the community, the church and sporting clubs. He died in Oct 1971 aged 72.

VX13 LtGen Sir Stanley George ‘Stan’ Savige was one of few to fight ‘All the King’s enemies’ in WW2 – Italy, Germany, Vichy France and Japan. Stan was appointed CBE and (another) MiD for the North African campaign, then the Greek MC after Greece & Crete. He then commanded 17 Bde against the Vichy French in the battle of Damour, Syria 5-9 Jul 1941.

On return to Australia Jan 1942 he was promoted MajGen and placed in command of 3 (Militia) Div, overseeing training until it moved to New Guinea in Feb 1943 for the Salamaua–Lae campaign. He was appointed CB for this campaign.

In Feb 1944, Stan was promoted LtGen and given command of I Corps, which was committed to Bougainville. On 8 Sep 1945, Stan accepted surrender of 23,500 Japanese soldiers at Torokina.

As a formation commander, Stan made concerted efforts to visit the front line, something many of his peers failed to do. His direction of campaigns was characterised by his encouragement of subordinate commanders and concern for his men. LtGen Stan Savige was appointed KCB in the King’s Birthday Honours on 8 Jun 1950.

Savige was a director of Olympic Tyre & Rubber Ltd from 1946 to 1951 and chairman of Moran & Cato Ltd from 1950 to 1951. He also chaired the Central War Gratuity Board from 1946 to 1951, and was a commissioner of the State Savings Bank of Victoria. He died in 1954

VX20303 Capt John Russell ‘Russ’ Savige (Brig Savige’s Cousin) from Moe, of A Coy 2/7th, was also awarded an MC for his actions on 3 Jan. Twice Mentioned in Despatches, he was to be taken POW in Crete; after the War he became a leading figure in Scouting Victoria and died in Moe in 1977.

Onwards to Tobruk

Marshall: *“The Battalion was withdrawn and dispersed, for the danger from an attack was not by any means over. And then the administration had to function. Russ Godby’s²⁴ lists in the RAP helped and we made some hasty discoveries within the next two days.*

After the collation of all the information we found ourselves with 83 casualties of all ranks and the heaviest casualties and mortality among the officers. Later our casualties were found to be the heaviest in the Bde and the heaviest in the Division as well.”

Ian had been one of the 2 Officers and 15 ORs KIA, plus 6 Officers and 55 ORs WIA from 2/7th Bn during the Battle of Bardia.

It took until early 5 Jan for all resistance to be subdued and the Bardia township to be secured; they remained in the area performing battlefield clearance then resting. Immediately after the battle, some supplies of wine were ‘liberated’ and some of the victors ended up overindulging before an exhausted sleep.

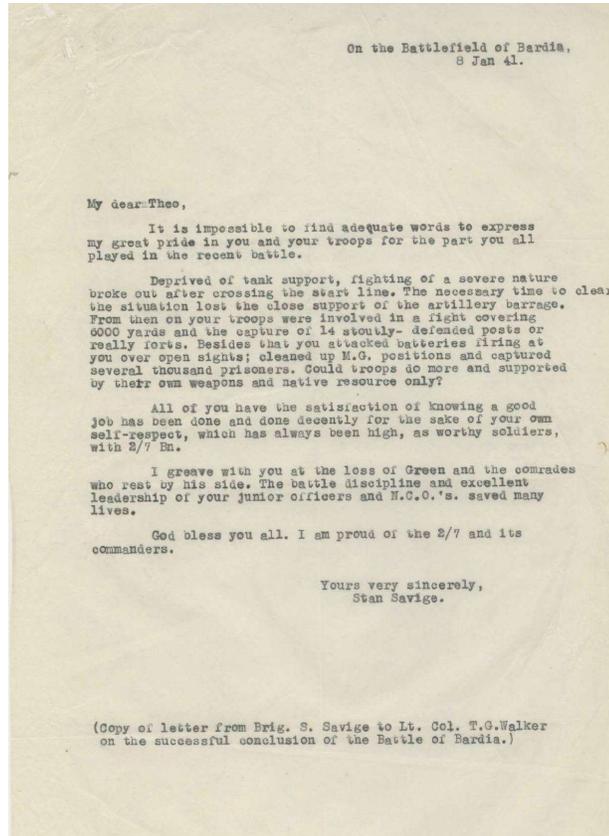
²⁴ VX 193 Norman Russel “Russ” Godby Regimental Medical Officer (RMO)

The Unit Padre is noted as having buried the dead on 7 Jan. The 2/7th departed for the upcoming Tobruk attack on 9 Jan.

After the battle, HQ sent out several letters to Unit CO's – this one to 'Myrtle'.

News Hits Home

News appeared back home commencing the day after the attack started. There was initially an air of excitement associated with the battle.





It was another 10 days before the Casualty Lists were released; this allowed for the delivery of telegrams to next of kin. This is an example, delivered by the postman on his bike – likely received by the family on 15 Jan.

Two similar telegrams were later received as the matter of Ian's type of death was resolved. One can imagine the anguish raised each time.

Casualty lists for the battle were released the following week. Casualty lists were published in major newspapers and regularly read by anybody with friends or relatives serving overseas.

8 GENERAL NEWS.

SECOND LIST OF A.I.F. CASUALTIES

Six Killed; 75 Wounded

More than 80 names are included in the second list of A.I.F. casualties from the Bardia battle area, which was issued yesterday by the Department of the Army. Made up of Victorian and New South Wales enlistments, the list includes the names of six killed in action (four of them Victorians), and 75 wounded. Of the latter, 59 were from Victoria and 16 from New South Wales.

VICTORIA

KILLED IN ACTION

The Victorians killed in action were:—
 —Captain D. I. Green, of Morwell;
 Lieut. B. H. Timms, of Castlemaine;
 Sapper E. C. Floyd, of Richmond, and
 Sapper J. C. Hood, of Surrey Hills.
 The two from New South Wales were
 Lieut. P. C. Jackson-Taylor, of Rose
 Bay, Sydney, and Lieut. L. D. Calman,
 of Port Kembla.

The list is as follows:—
 VX1213, Spr. E. C. Floyd (Engrs.),
 Richmond.
 Capt. D. I. Green (VX170) (Infy.),
 Morwell.
 VX3429, Spr. J. C. Hood (Engrs.),
 Surrey Hills.
 Lieut. B. H. Timms (VX8409)
 (Infy.), Castlemaine.

WOUNDED IN ACTION.

VX7197, Pte. E. G. F. Abe (Infy.),
 Albury.
 VX4680, Pte. W. T. a'Beckett
 (Infy.), Underwood.
 VX1383, Spr. L. R. Atkinson
 (Engrs.), Malvern.
 VX2033, Sig. G. A. Baldoek (Sig-

SERIOUSLY ILL

VX13,157, Pte. W. G. Bresler (In-
 fantry), Warragul.

REMOVED FROM SERIOUSLY ILL LIST

VX41,402, Pte. A. J. Findlay (Infan-
 try), Kew.
 VX20,434, Gnr. A. Sharp (Arty.),
 Longwarry.
 VX10,563, Pte. H. L. E. Siddons
 (Sply. and Trspt.), North Eltham.

NEW SOUTH WALES

KILLED IN ACTION

NX12,164, Lieut. P. C. Jackson-Tay-
 lor (Infantry), Rose Bay.
 NX89, Lieut. L. D. Calman (Infan-
 try), Port Kembla.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

NX216, Capt. G. H. Godbold (Infan-
 try), West Maitland.
 NX240, Lieut. K. J. Macpherson
 (Infantry), Roseville.
 NX1406, Lieut. A. A. McLellan (In-
 fantry), Murrumbidgee.
 NX1406, Pte. J. V. Crockett (Infan-
 try), Baeramb.
 NX2420, Pte. C. A. Johnston (In-
 fantry), Eastwood.
 NX4133, L.-Cpl. L. Lee (Infantry),
 Milson's Point.

It was common for a short biography to be included of several of them, particularly residents of country towns.

CAPTAIN IAN GREEN

The death of Captain Ian Green, killed while on Active Service Abroad, was received with great regret by Officers, N.C.O.'s and men of "B" Company, 37th Battalion. As one of the original officers of the company comprised of Traralgon and Sale men, and attached to the Sale detachment, he was highly esteemed by all ranks. In the militia he held a similar rank to that which he filled with so much credit in the A.I.F.

Captain Green was also well known in Heyfield military circles. Prior to his enlistment he was a clerk in the National Bank at Sale. Upon the outbreak of war he immediately volunteered for service abroad. His ability to organise was soon recognised.

Capt. Green was the second son of Mr and Mrs A. A. Green, of Morwell, and received his education in that town. He was a brother of Mrs Stan. Chester, of Glenmaggie.

The men of the 37th Battalion quite a few of whom are now in camp and overseas, have lost a beloved officer. By his genial personality he gained the esteem and confidence of all ranks.

Heyfield News 23 Jan 1941

Age 16 Jan 41

KILLED IN ACTION

Captain Ian Green

Great regret was felt in Sale on Tuesday afternoon when the sad news was received from his family in Morwell that **Captain Ian Green**, who enlisted in the A.I.F. at Sale, had been killed in action.

Prior to the outbreak of war, Mr. Ian Green, who was a clerk in the National Bank at Sale and resided at the Club Hotel, was prominent in the formation of the Militia in Gippsland. He was soon granted a commission and attended an officers' school. Upon the outbreak of war he immediately volunteered his services for abroad. The good work he had accomplished in an organising capacity was recognised and he was amongst the first of the A.I.F. to leave Australia for Egypt, where he was promoted to **captaincy**.

While he was resident in Sale, Mr. Green made many friends by his gentlemanly bearing, his unassuming manner and the painstaking way he carried out the duties he undertook in connection with local sporting bodies. His assistance to the Sale Golf Club at tournament time was particularly appreciated.

Prior to leaving for abroad he was travelled and made several presentations. Many friends appreciated his action in offering his services to his country and looked forward to his return. From Egypt came good reports of the work he was doing; he was a methodical and reliable soldier. Now the news comes as the first Sale casualty in the war. It is greatly regretted.

WOUNDED

News has also been received that Major Hugh Wrigley, M.C., has also been "wounded" and it is noted that he is not classed as "seriously wounded."

Major Wrigley, then a **Captain**, enlisted in Sale, where he resided, at the outbreak of war and was the district representative of the Vacuum Oil Company. He saw service in the last war when he gained the Military Cross. At the close of the war he joined the Indian Army and engaged in fighting activities in Afghanistan in 1919. In 1920 he was soldiering in Mesopotamia and later in Waziristan. In Gippsland he was a member of the 37th Battalion (East Gippsland Regiment).

Gippsland Times 16 Jan 1941

Killed in Action,

CAPTAIN I. GREEN

Quite a gloom was cast over the town and flags were flown at half mast when the sad news came to hand on Tuesday last, that **Capt. Ian Green**, second son of Mr and Mrs A. A. Green, of Morwell, had been killed in action in the recent attack on Bardia in which the Australians played such an important part.

The deceased young man was born in Morwell, and was held in the highest respect by a large circle of friends. He had attained the rank of **Captain** and had he not met with misfortune was, undoubtedly, destined to attain a brilliant military career.

At meeting of Morwell Shire Council, yesterday, the President (Cr. D. G. Williams) mentioned that Mr and Mrs A. Green had received word that their son, **Capt. Ian Green**, had been killed in action. The sad news came as a great shock to them and the people of the district. **Capt. Green** was the first in the Shire to be killed in the present war. The Council had agreed that on occasions when the death of a

soldier was reported, flags be flown at half mast and a letter of sympathy be sent to the parents.

Cr. Ronald said that **Capt. Green** having made the supreme sacrifice, brought very forcibly before them that a war was on. No one could fully realise what parents felt in their sad loss. In conclusion, Cr. Ronald moved:

"That this Council on behalf of the citizens of the Morwell Shire, convey to Mr and Mrs A. A. Green and family deepest sympathy in their bereavement, and gratitude for the supreme sacrifice that has been made for us personally and for the British Empire by the late **Capt. Ian Green**."

The motion was seconded by Cr. Hall and carried, after which all members of the Council rose and stood in silence as the President remarked "Lest We Forget."

Morwell Advertiser 16 Jan 1941

(Inf.)
WINTER, Pte. J. H., Geelong (Inf.).
DIED OF WOUNDS
ARMSTRONG, Cpl. N. G., Williamstown (Inf.). Previously reported wounded in action.
GREEN, **Capt.** D. I. A., Morwell (Inf.). Previously reported killed in action.
MONGER, Pte. J. G., Clifton Hill (Inf.).
RYAN, Pte. E. J., Boort (Inf.).
SYMINGTON, A Sgt. W., Queenscliff (Inf.).
MISSING
LESLIE, Pte. G. S., Brunswick (Inf.).
WOUNDED IN ACTION
ARNOTT, Pte. K. G., Collingwood (Inf.).
BAKER, Pte. C., Kensington (Inf.).
BAYMAN, L. Sgt. W. H., Ascotvale (Inf.).
BEARD, Pte. R. L., Nhill (Inf.).

Argus 23 Jan 41

The revised casualty lists noted Ian again as his status changed from KIA to DOW and back to KIA.

The local newspapers in coming weeks were to record the specific circumstances of Ian's death, noting it as 'an act of Italian perfidy'. Of course, the family came to know of this, having it played out in the public domain.

It is likely that the Greens would have received a letter from 'Myrtle' as his CO, and probably also from Brig Stan Savige, given his connection to Morwell.

Ian was arguably known in Morwell due to his father's status, however in Sale his professional and Militia reputations were self-made.

Whilst tragic, it is significant that every local newspaper went well beyond simply noting Ian's previous life, going on to note many of the positive aspects of his character, his habits and the effect he had on these places before the war; these heartfelt words speak for themselves.

Jean O'Halloran

Ian had also been close to Jean's parents; they moved to Wangaratta (Vine Hotel) in Jun 1939. The Vine Hotel's goes back to 1864. The building dates from the 1880s; the bricks were made on site from clay on the property.

The O'Hallorans were the only non-Green family members who placed notices on his death. Jean also placed a notice that day; it says everything about their relationship. Another heart broken.

Published two days after the casualty lists appeared, it appears they were not informed by the Greens prior, so learned the news when it reached the public domain.

—Inserted by his pal, Stan.
GREEN—Captain David Ian Green, beloved and esteemed friend of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. O'Halloran, Vine Hotel, Wangaratta. His duty nobly done.
GREEN—Captain D. Ian, loving and loved friend of Jean O'Halloran, killed in action.
HENDERSON—Sergeant John James, beloved brother of Reita (Mrs. J. Henderson).

Age & Argus 18 Jan 1941

Personal.
 In the list of A.I.F. battle and other casualties, published on Thursday, appeared the name of Private C. L. Cowley, of Healesville. Private Cowley was a well known resident, and an interesting letter from him had been published in this paper, while just recently his great friend, Mr. Arch. Campbell, had received another letter from him. Captain D. I. Green, listed as killed in action, was engaged to be married to Constable O'Halloran's sister.

Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian 18 Jan 1941

On the same day a note appeared in the Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian; Jean's brother (a local policeman) was clearly of the view they were engaged and likely too were their parents. Jean had paid the price in full for Ian – One wonders if the Greens ever learned anything of this?

Parallel yet separate to the Greens, Jean carried her grief and moved on, continuing to work as a midwife at the Women's Hospital. Jean met and married Desmond Joseph Davis (B 1912), a railway employee in mid-1943 and they lived at 175 Brighton Rd St Kilda, happily married for 61 years. They had two daughters: Jill (Linklater) and Suzanne (Dowling) and two Grandchildren.

Des died in 2004; Jean in 2007, aged 91. Jean's Obituary says: 'An Inspiration to many'. They are believed buried at Springvale Cemetery. Jean's life with Des appears well lived – she deserved it. Of all potential outcomes associated with Ian's death, this was the best possible version for Jean.

Golf Club

SALE GOLF CLUB

Mr. J. C. Lee President for Twelfth Year

There was a good attendance of members and Associates at the annual meeting of Sale Golf Club held at the Mechanics' Institute on Thursday evening. The President (Mr. J. C. Lee) presided.

The President, feelingly, referred to the death on active service of Captain Ian Green, a most valuable member of the club and who held the position of Captain for 12 months. At the send-off tendered Captain Green by the club they all looked forward to the day when he would return and play on the links but such was not to be. The club had already forwarded a letter of condolence to his parents and he moved that they place on record the valuable services rendered by him to the club. The motion was carried by members standing in silence.

Gippsland Times 17 Mar 1941

GOLF

With the course greatly improved by the recent rains, golfers found conditions ideal for play in the Ian Green Memorial Trophy.

The event resulted in a hollow victory for Postmaster Vanner and he will certainly come under the handicapper's knife for Saturday's effort. The winner's score was 88, 28-62. The runner-up was Ron Borthwick with 88, 16-67, and in third place was the consistent Geoff Waymouth with 91, 22-69.

Leading scores were: H. Vanner, 88, 28-62; R. M. Borthwick, 88, 16-67; G. Waymouth, 91, 22-69; R. Dewar, 88, 13-70.

Gippsland Times 11 Aug 41

The Sale Golf Club introduced the 'Ian Green Memorial Trophy' to be played, first in Aug 1941 and then annually until 1986. Libby Thomson's husband Bill won the trophy one year and the trophy was given to him after the competition was completed.



Letter from Germany

400510 Sgt John 'Jack' Evans of Morwell joined the RAAF and served on 459 Sqn as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner on Hudson maritime bombers, operating from bases in Egypt. Whilst attacking German barges off the coast of Sollum his aircraft was hit by flak and was forced to ditch in the sea. Three of the four crew exited the aircraft and survived. They were captured and became POWs.

RAF Kriegsgefangenenpost
Postkarte

An: MR IAN GREEN

Gebührenzeit: 65

Vor- und Zuname: Sgt JOHN EVANS

Gefangenenummer: 25159

Lager-Bezeichnung: M-Stammlager VIII B

Deutschland (Allemagne)

Empfangsort: MORWELL

Straße: VICTORIA

Land: AUSTRALIA

Landesteil (Provinz usw.)

3 PASSED BY CENSOR 326

Jack spent time in the same POW camp as most of the 2/7th diggers captured on Crete, and in mid-1943 a postcard arrived at the Green's Morwell house. John related that many in his POW camp were Australians from 2/7th Battalion; some had served under Ian's command in B Company when he was killed.

To quote John: "They spoke very highly of Ian, in fact they said he was the best officer they had".

Kriegsgefangenenlager Datum: 12-2-43

Dear Mr & Mrs Green, I expect you are surprised to hear from me, I felt I should write because I have met a few Aust soldiers who knew Ian rather well and were with him at the time he was shot. They spoke very highly of Ian, in fact they said he was the best officer they had. I know you will be proud to hear this perhaps in the near future I will be able to tell you what the boys told me. Hoping you are all well. Sorry this can't be longer.

yours sincerely John

After the War

A welcome home parade was held on 8 Dec 46 at Morwell. LtGen Savage was the key speaker; the Greens as well as Ian were specifically mentioned in speeches.

Welcome Home.

Big Day in Morwell Last Sunday.

COMMENTING on the general bearing of the ex-service personnel (men and women), who marched past the saluting post last Sunday, Lieut.-General Savage, who took the salute, said he had rarely seen any body march with more precision.

The persistent inclemency of the weather led the committee to make the final decision at 11 a.m. on Sunday morning to change over the function from the Recreation Reserve to the Town Hall, a decision that met with general approval although it is regretted that, despite the utilisation of every available foot of floor space, quite a considerable number of people were unable to gain admittance. These people were to some extent compensated by being able to follow the proceedings through the broadcasting system.

The march which was capably led by the Morwell Band, strengthened by reinforcements from Traralgon, consisted of 170 guests of the day, led by Captain Russell Parfrey, with Capt. J. Anderson, second in command. A halt was made at the Memorial for the laying of a wreath by Captain Parfrey in honour of the Fallen.

After the opening of the proceedings in the hall with the National Anthem and a Silent Prayer for those who had not returned, Mr. F. J. Jenkins, chairman of the Welcome Home Committee, in extending a hearty welcome to the guests, said that this was the day so long awaited by all. He referred to the change over from the oval to the hall, and trusted that everyone could be accommodated in the building. In welcoming the guest speakers, who had travelled from the city to attend, he expressed particular satisfaction in the presence of one of their own citizens by birth, that great and distinguished soldier, Lieut.-General Stan Savage, Capt. H. E. Johnstone (R.S.L. Headquarters), Major Keys (representing the executive of the Legion) and Mr. Warren (liaison officer of the Legion).

Mr. Ronald said that it was his pleasure, on behalf of the council, to extend his congratulations to the Welcome Home Committee on the excellent arrangements made, and a warm welcome, on behalf of the citizens to the visitors and guests, whose service was such that the people not only honoured them but were honoured by their presence. The personnel were not visitors, but their own people, guests of those who had stayed at home in safety and comfort. He trusted that the shire and the nation would never

forget what was owed to them. In a spirit of rejoicing, hand in hand with a spirit of grateful remembrance, they could best remember by not forgetting the sacrifices of those who had lost their nearest and dearest. For the days ahead he wished them in all sincerity a bright and secure future in happy homes of their own. No one could wish them more.

Captain H. E. Johnstone apologised for the absence of Mr. Holland, and expressed his pleasure at being associated with the Welcome Home. This was a district rich in tradition justly proud of its war effort, and the fact that it was the birthplace of one of Australia's most distinguished soldiers, General Savage. He himself remembered once at Mersu Matruh when food was short opening a Comforts Fund parcel sent by a Morwell family (Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Green), also that Morwell had suffered one of the earliest casualties in the war in Capt. Ian Green. The path back to civil life was not strewn with roses, and the battle of peace was still being fought. They must not forget their obligations to their comrades in arms with whom they still had a common battle to fight. The task of rehabilitation was a difficult one and one in which they must fight their own battle, and not rely too much on the Government and citizens. It was the duty of the more fortunate ones among them to help their less fortunate comrades in the task of rehabilitating themselves. He wished them luck on the road back.

Major P. Keys, D.S.O., M.C. and B.A. apologised for the absence of Col. Parkes, Victorian president of the Legion. He had great pleasure in being there that day to witness the enthusiasm of the citizens of Morwell in welcoming home their ex-service personnel. It is the duty of the State Executive of the Legion to go through with anything that is of benefit to members and ex-servicemen and to co-operate with R.S.L. If this could be accomplished he felt that it had been amply rewarded.

Lieut.-General Savage said that he felt that the day must be a happy one for the people of Morwell. It was the fulfilment of great hopes of safe return and also the fulfilment of great longings on the part of service personnel to be back with their families. Of all the longings of men on service the most important was to be home. When he received an order from the chairman to come, he was happy to obey, particularly since this was the

(Continued on Page 4.)

WELCOME HOME.

(Continued from Front Page.)

quarter in which he had first seen the light of day. Memories were the precious possession of those who served.

The General recalled the exploits of the 17th Brigade, of which he was the Brigadier, through the Western Desert campaign. This brigade included the 37th Battalion, with which he had been associated in the pre-war days. The numbers of men from East Gippsland included in the 6th Division showed the quality and breed of these Gippslanders. The burden on the minds of the ill-equipped men of the 6th Division prior to the first battle on 3rd January, 1940, was whether they would let the "old boys" of the 1st A.I.F. down. The answer was that after the fight 46,000 Italians passed through the P.O.W. cages despite the fact that they were told only 20,000 troops were opposing the Division.

In this battle one of the earliest casualties was that distinguished and gallant soldier, Captain Ian Green, of Morwell.

Then followed the fight across the desert until they ran up against the superior armor of Rommel. Then the retreat back towards the Egyptian border. Later in Greece, where the A.I.F. had as much chance as "a snowflake in Hades", and from which so many got away solely through the courage and devotion of the truck drivers, combined with the possession of a high degree of discipline. Then Crete and later Syria before the return to Australia to answer the challenge of the Japs. By this time there were nearly a million Australians in uniform.

It was his firm conviction that no Australians or men of any other country ever endured such ordeals in warfare as the jungle fighting in New Guinea called for. In this warfare a man was not considered sick until he fell down. Yet while fighting against the additional enemies of dampness, fever and irregular rations they were able to inflict the first defeat on the Japs at Milne Bay. From 1942 to the middle of 1944 the Australians did the job in pushing back the enemy in New Guinea with only token American assistance.

Sitting at a table in Bougainville receiving the surrender of the 17th Japanese Army and the Naval Force, the predominant thought in his mind was the superior quality of the A.I.F. and the inferiority of the Japs. It was then learnt how near Australia had been to losing all. The enemy had

driven down to New Caledonia to establish bases for attack on Australia and were frustrated by one lone American Marine Division at Guadalcanal and the holding on of the Australians in New Guinea. The opportunity never came again. So close had the attempt been that only a miracle had saved Australia.

As Kipling has so appropriately remarked that while it is all "Tommy" during a war there was little about "Tommy" afterwards. People were no longer interested in the war, and were immersed in their own affairs of reconstruction. The fact that they had the opportunity to reconstruct was due solely to the men who served. The importance of the spirit of service this time is tremendous and servicemen were called on now for service in the highest degree.

Rehabilitation this time is a great improvement on the last war, but it still falls far short. The hope of this centred in all of the servicemen pulling together in harness. As a team they could build a nation. If they did not do that, he did not know who would.

Before making the presentations, the chairman (Mr. Jenkins) said he would like, first of all on behalf of the Welcome Home Committee, to record its appreciation of the man behind the scenes in the success of the function, Mr. Allan Rome. Everything had been thoroughly organised and efficiently carried out as was evident from the success of the function.

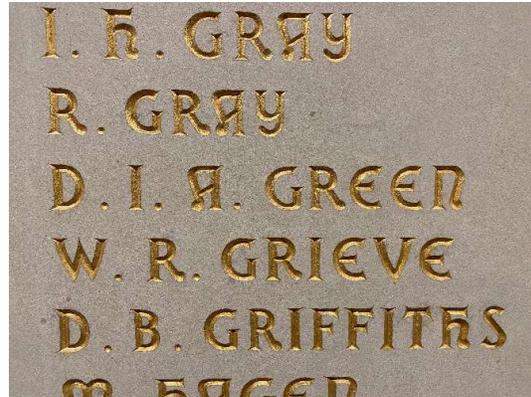
It was thought of the citizens of Morwell to make to each of its returned girls and boys a presentation of a small token of what they owed for services rendered. The people of Morwell had watched them through the war years in adversity and victory, and knew that when they had equipment almost equal, at least, to the enemy, that the nation would be secure. His job was to make presentations of rugs, which, he hoped, would keep them warm, yet not half so warm as the welcome.

"Everyone of you," concluded Mr. Jenkins, "have made good pals. 'dinkum coppers" in the language of the 1st A.I.F. Your rallying together in the fine march to-day is sufficient proof that your friendships will endure through life."

The guests then filed past the presentation table and each received a rug of a quality for which the Geelong Woollen Mills are famous, together with a souvenir programme of the day's proceedings. About 170 rugs were handed over, and arrangements will be made by the committee to despatch the gifts to each of the hundred odd guests, who were debarred by travelling conditions from taking part in the function.

Scotch College

Ian is named on the Scotch College Second World War Roll of Honour, located on the rear wall within the Memorial Hall.



NBA

Ian's death was noted in 'The Nautilus' (Quarterly magazine of the National Bank Staff Club) No. 35 of Mar 1941.

His name is included on the National Bank of Australasia's WW2 Honour Roll, with 108 other employees of the bank who gave their lives during the war. It appears that Ian was the first NBA employee to have been Killed in Action in WW2.

The Honour Board is located at the NAB museum, Knox Data Centre, 122 Lewis Road, Wantirna South, VIC 3152.



Club Hotel, Sale

The Club Hotel (105 Foster St) closed several years ago. It is roughly opposite the previous location of the National Bank of Australasia Building where Ian worked, the site is presently occupied by the Matador Motel.

Green St, Morwell

There is thought that Green St Morwell was named after Ian; it is in an area bearing WW2 related names, however the Street was named by the Council in honour of Arthur Green well after the war in recognition of his citizenship and civic contribution over many years.

Morwell and District Community Hospital

After the war, the 'old' Morwell Bush Nursing Hospital, Elgin Street underwent major renovations and was opened in early 1956.

There is a recollection of a plaque containing Ian's details placed in one of the new wards – see Philip Hurst's quote at the end of this chapter. This is most likely resulted from a family donation to the extension of the hospital.

As was usual for the Greens, there was no mention made of this, nor was there any records left. This donation would be very much in the character of the family; generous but not wanting to draw attention to themselves.

Medals

Ian's Medals were received one by one after the War as they were issued and they resided in Kit's room. They sat in a glass lidded box on purple velvet, on her dressing table. The grandchildren saw it often, almost daily when visiting Granny when she was "not well" and in bed.

Ian was entitled to wear these medals on his left breast. *Relatives who wish to may purchase full size or miniature replicas, have them mounted and wear them on their right breast.*

Left to Right

- **1939-1945 Star** six months operational service
3 Sep 1939 to 2 Sep 1945
- **Africa Star** operational service in North Africa from Italy's entry to war 10 Jun 1940, until 12 May 1943.
- **Defence Medal** 6 months service in a non-operational area subject to enemy air attack or closely threatened, in Australia and overseas.
- **War Medal 1939-45** 28 days full-time service in the Armed Forces between 3 Sep 1939 and 2 Sep 1945.
- **Australia Service Medal 1939-45** service in Australian Armed Forces or Mercantile Marine at home or overseas at least 30 days full-time or 90 days part-time, between 3 Sep 1939 & 2 Sep 1945.



Framed Medals Rank Badges & Photo AC

The Greens

There was little said about Ian by any family members to those who remain alive today. Much of the material collated within this narrative has been found by following up leads given by some brief and occasionally vague recollections passed on a generation ago.

The Green Family was, of course devastated at his death. Arthur was quoted as saying we should not make idols of the dead and thus make it hard for the living. It was very much in the nature of

the Green family of the time not to talk much about family matters – this was not unusual for the times and the generation – so very little information was volunteered. Like many of those times, they chose to deal with their grief by maintaining silence – after all, they were one family amongst many others.

‘In Memoriam’ notices were placed annually by Kit on behalf of the family in the Age and the Argus. It is clear the nickname ‘Sol’ was known (and accepted) by them. The last notice was placed the year of Kit’s death. Several similar notices were also placed by Nell Green (Uncle Gus’ wife). Variations of the above notice appeared every 3 Jan from 1942 until 1954. It is reasonable to believe they were placed by Kit.

(Inserted by loving father and mother, D. and A. Grant.)
GREEN—VX170, Captain D. I. A. Green (Sol), 2/7th Battalion, 6th Division, killed in action, Bardia, January 3, 1941.
GREEN—David Ian, gave his life at Bardia, January 3, 1941. —We will remember him.
HOOD—VX5420, Corporal J. C. Hood, killed in action at Bardia, January 3, 1941.

Argus 3 Jan 1942

Arthur, and Dallas. —Always we will remember.
GREEN—VX170, Captain D. I. A. Green (Sol), 2/7th Battalion, 6th Division, killed in action, Bardia, January 3, 1941.
KIDDLE—In loving memory of dear Dick killed in action at Bardia, January 3, 1941.

Argus 3 Jan 1945

(Inserted by father, mother, and sisters.)
GREEN—VX170, Captain D. I. A. Green (Sol), 2/7th Battalion, killed in action, Bardia, January 3, 1941. (Inserted by loving father, mother, sisters, brother.)
GREEN—Captain David Ian, VX170, proud and loving memory of Ian, who gave his life, Bardia, 1941. (Neil Green.)
HOOD—Remembering my dear son, Jack, VX5420, Cpl. J. C. Hood, 2/2nd Field

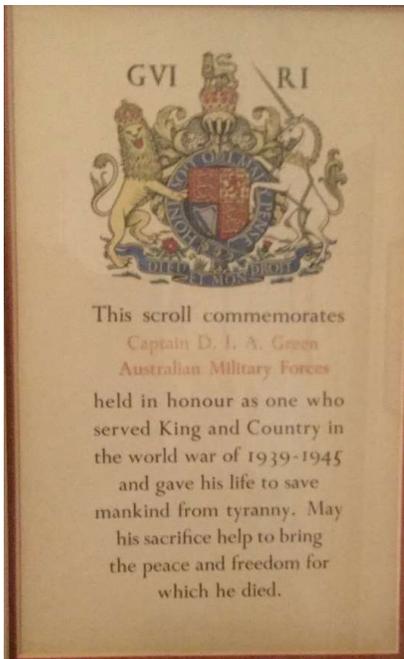
Argus 3 Jan 1946

by request.)
IN MEMORIAM
On Active Service
GREEN—VX170 Capt. D. I. A. Green, Bardia, January 3, 1941. —In loving memory. (Father, mother, sisters, brother, Morwell.)
McKENZIE—Sig. Cyril M., died while prisoner of war, January 2, 1945.

Argus Sat 2 Jan 1954

January 3, 1941. —Till we meet again. (Inserted by father, mother, and sisters.)
GREEN—VX170, Captain D. I. A. Green (Sol), 2/7th Battalion, killed in action, Bardia, January 3, 1941. (Inserted by loving father, mother, sisters, brother.)
GREEN—Captain David Ian, VX170. In proud and loving memory of Ian, who gave his life, Bardia, 1941. (Neil Green.)
HOOD—Remembering my dear son, Jack, VX5420, Cpl. J. C. Hood, 2/2nd Field

Argus 3 Jan 1946



Ian Green Memorial Scroll JT

Ian’s Immediate Family

After the war, grieving families received a memorial scroll. For completeness, the lives of Ian’s siblings and parents are summarised below:

Eleanor Annie (Webster) (16 Feb 1903) – 4 Jul 1989 (Mornington)

‘Ella’ had qualified as a Nurse, earning the Gold Medal for her year. She married Stewart Thornton Webster – Bank Manager (1898-1978) in Feb 1935 in Morwell. Together they had Winifred Eleanor ‘Freddie’ (Capp) and Anne Stewart (Daniel).

Kathleen Ida Green (2 Aug 1904) – 17 Jul 1994 (Maffra)

‘Kath’ qualified as a Pharmacist and did not marry. She worked in country Victoria and Western Australia for a period as a relieving Chemist, eventually returning to

Morwell to look after Arthur, where she remained for the rest of her life.

Jean Florence Elizabeth (Chester) (28 Jul 1906) – 27 Oct 1967 (Heyfield)

Jean also qualified as a Pharmacist, winning a Gold medal for her results; she toured central Australia during the 1930's. Jean Married Robert William Stanley Chester – Grazier (1902-1985) in 1937 and they had five children; Robert Ian, Kathleen Sophie (Wright), Elizabeth Jean 'Libby' (Thomson), Arthur Stanley and John Henry.

Arthur 'Barras' Green (28 May 1909) D. 25 Jan 1960 (Morwell)

Barras attempted to enlist at least twice during the war; having expended considerable effort to attain the required fitness standard, he failed to pass the medical. Having been closest to Ian, he remained profoundly affected by Ian's death. He is remembered as saying 'He was murdered by the Italians' with strong emotions. Barras was a keen tennis player and fisherman. Upon closure of the drapery in 1951, he established a radio and electrical business in Morwell.

Barras married Joan McGregor Grant 30 Mar 1942 and they had four children; Susan (Hateley), Kathryn (Adams), Bronwyn (Hirons) and Julie (Thomson). Barras died suddenly at age 51.

Catherine 'Kit' Green (21 Apr 1873) D. 12 Mar 1954 (Morwell)

Kit became ill after the War, her illness most likely made worse by a broken heart, bravely hidden from the extended family.

Later a nurse visited every day to take care of Kit. It is believed Kit suffered a heart condition, plus both she and Aunt Betty suffered a painful and crippling form of rheumatism.

Arthur Albert Green (25 Apr 1877) D. 9 Apr 1966 (Morwell)

Possibly as a result of the number of widows left after WW1, Arthur came to take particular interest in encouraging his daughters and granddaughters to gain qualifications and become self-sufficient.

Arthur closed the Tarwin St drapery to retire in 1951, selling the property which became a Coles store (since relocated to Elgin St). He remained active in the community, living at 53 Elgin St Morwell and died on 9 Apr 1966 at the age of 89. At the time of his death he had outlived three of his five children, and his wife.

The 2/7th Battalion after Crete - Syria

The 2/7th Bn's casualties in Greece and Crete were heavy and by the end of the campaign it had essentially been destroyed. The fighting in Greece resulted in 8 KIA, 7 WIA and 65 POW, while a further 27 were KIA on Crete, with 70 WIA and 433 POW.

Instead of being disbanded, 2/7th was rebuilt in Palestine from the 50 members who had not been sent to Crete, with 16 men who escaped Crete, plus a large number of reinforcements. Once complete, the 2/7th was sent to Syria to perform occupation duties following conclusion of the Syria-Lebanon campaign.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and Malaya on 7 Dec 1941. In early 1942 the Australian government requested the return of 6 Div from the Middle East.

2/7th – Fighting in New Guinea

On 10 Mar 42, the Bn embarked for Australia aboard the troopship HMT Westernland. En route, the 2/7th was diverted to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where it undertook defensive duties as part of a force made from 16th and 17th Bdes to defend against the perceived threat of Japanese invasion.

Returning to Australia in Aug 1942 on board MV Athlone Castle, the 2/7th spent a short period of time preparing to fight the Japanese in New Guinea. Concentrating around Seymour, Victoria, a welcome home parade was held in Melbourne, after which the Bn moved by rail to Greta, NSW in Sep. A short time later, there was a further move north to Ascot, QLD, from where the Bn embarked on the HMAT Tasman mid-Oct, bound for Gili-Gili airstrip near Milne Bay. They were destined for the Wau-Salamaua campaign and returned to Australia in Oct 1943.

2/7th Bn returned to PNG a second time for the Aitape-Wewak campaign, then was disbanded at Puckapunyal after war's end in Feb 1946. 8/7 Bn Royal Victoria Regiment now carries its lineage.

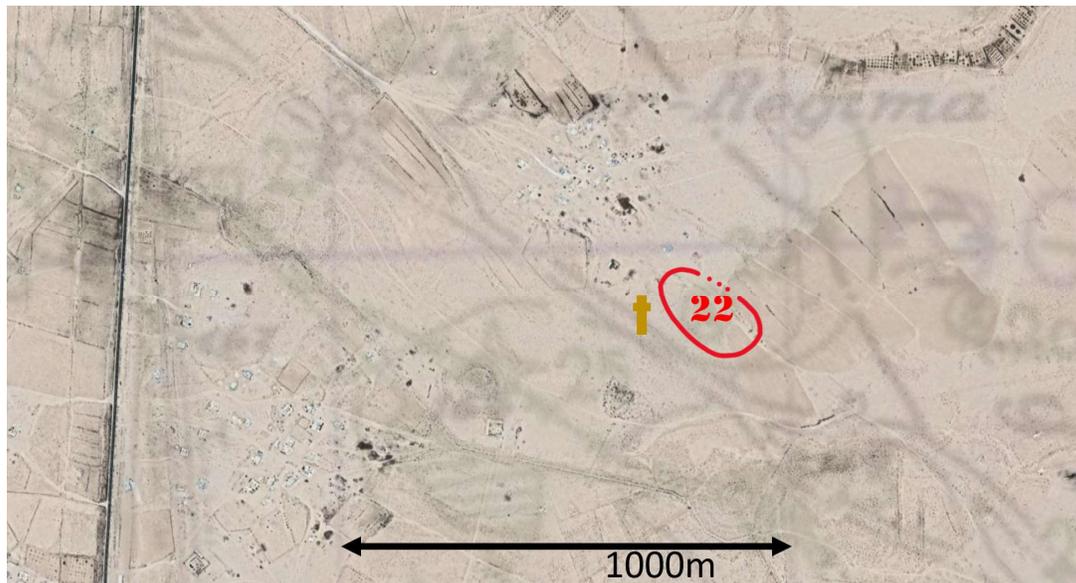
During the war, 3,155 personnel served in the 2/7th Bn. Of these, 143 were KIA, 36 DOW, and 14 died of other causes. A further 472 were WIA and 499 were POW.

Members of the battalion received the following decorations: 2 X OBE, 6 X DSO, 11 X MC, 5 X DCM, 26 X MM and 60 X MiD.

Post 22, Bardia

Unlike many old battlefields, a current aerial photograph still clearly shows evidence where most of Bardia's/(*Bardiyah*), Libya, defensive posts have been filled in. Post 22 will be relatively easy to locate, and based on the records, the approximate location where Ian fell may also be identified.

Below is a 2020 aerial photograph to scale, superimposed with a Dec 1940 map of the fortress, overlaid with Post 22 and where Ian fell. The faint grid lines are spaced 1,000m. The roadway on the left is the Bardia-Fort Capuzzo/Sollum Road which formed the start line for B Coy's attack.



Aerial photo - Nearmap



To the writer's knowledge, no family members have visited Ian's grave in Sollum/(*Sallum, El Salloum, As Sallum*), Egypt. If you visit, it is suggested:

- Tell the extended family – we want to know!
 - Don't worry about taking flowers, real or fake. They won't last.
 - Trinkets and similar tend to disappear.
 - Get some poppies – purchase from your local RSL or save some from Anzac Day.
 - See if you can collect a handful of dirt and/or a few small stones from the Sale Golf Club; somewhere where Ian was at peace and amongst friends. A handful of dirt from anywhere in Australia will do. Ian deserves to lie beneath some Australian soil.
 - You will be saying 'goodbye' for many family members as well as old comrades who also never had the chance. See Philip Hurst's moving thoughts below.
- Obtain a recording of the 'Last Post' and/or 'Flowers of the Forest/The Lament', save them to your mobile phone (in Files) so you can play them on site. (The Lament is the bagpipes equivalent to the Last Post and is appropriate for Scotch College and 52nd Bn)
 - Laurence Binyon's 'For the Fallen' remains the most appropriate verse to recite – it contains the 'Ode'

***They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.***

***They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.***

Philip Hurst visited Morwell again sometime after 1956.

"Many years later in Morwell Vic, I was visiting the Morwell Private Hospital (Morwell and District Community Hospital, Elgin St) where my daughter Elaine had recently given birth to her first child.

Passing along a passage I saw a plaque on the door of a ward, commemorating the life and death of Captain Green. It was placed there by his wife (sic) and family. I could not resist a look inside.

I don't know what I expected to see but it gave me a turn to find a room full of local Italians happily chatting with a lady in the bed. There were no reasons why they should not be there. Yet somehow it seemed to put me off balance. I have always regarded Captain Green's death as a murder.

Suddenly seeing the plaque had caught me off guard, then seeing the Italians so happy there brought it all back. Maybe the problem lies in the fact that in war one does not get the chance to say farewell to a friend. He goes down and you move on. I still wish I could have said a last 'Goodbye'. If not to 'The Skipper' to his face, then by his graveside. A funeral closes the book; I now realise that the book will never be closed for me.

I also believe that this is probably why people grieve for so long for their war dead. The separation and the loss are compounded by the lack of a final goodbye and the lack of a funeral or a grave. No doubt it has something to do with the desire of old soldiers to go back to where fallen comrades lie – for people to go to great expense to visit the graves overseas of loved ones even after fifty years."

It is significant that Philip should have chosen his reminder of Ian's death to note the above emotions – it is by far the most appropriate closure for this story.

Forgiveness

Shortly before Ian's arrival in Palestine, VX259 Captain Edward Ernest 'Weary' Dunlop had arrived as a Capt Medical Officer, HQ, Australian Overseas Base, Jerusalem. He was Acting Assistant Director of Medical Services. He and Ian are likely to have met and known each other.

By 1942, 'Weary' was a LtCol in command of 1 Allied General Hospital (1AGH) at Bandoeng, Dutch East Indies when Java fell to the Japanese. They were captured and became POWs. Australian POWs under Dunlop's command were transferred later that year to Singapore. In Jan 1943 he left Singapore for Thailand in charge of "Dunlop Force" to work on the Thai – Burma railway. He remained there until the war ended, laboring tirelessly to save wounded, sick and malnourished men.

Many times he put his life at risk as he stood up to the brutality of his Japanese captors. Though not the only medical officer to act in this selfless way, his name became legend among Australian POWs and an inspiration for their survival.

Many of his comrades could never bring themselves to forgive their captors.

Post war, he devoted himself to the health and welfare of former POWs and their families and worked to promote better relations between Australia and Asia. He remained active with ex-POW and veterans' associations. In his later years he led commemorative tours to the Burma-Thailand railway.

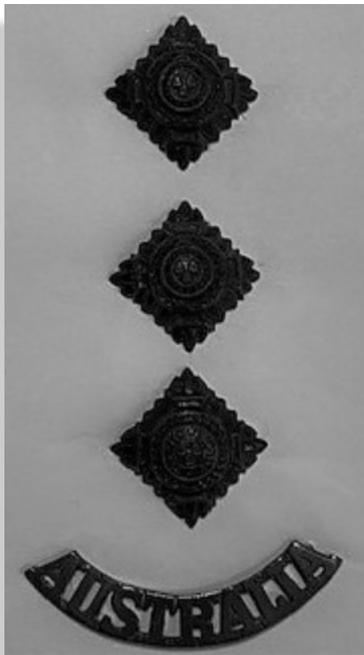
After 1945, with the darkness of the war years behind him, Dunlop forgave his Japanese captors and turned his energies to the task of healing and building. He was to state later that "*in suffering we are all equal*". A man known for his bravery and determination to resist, had come to reject hatred of his former captors and promoted reconciliation with the Japanese.

During the war, 'Weary' was fearless in the face of the enemy while caring for his comrades. He grew to understand the need for forgiveness and inclusivity after peace came. 'Weary' remains the example for conduct during peace and war.

It was all so long ago.

12

What If?



“As a young man I was doubtless a bloody prig-insufferable type of fellow. But, because of the circumstances of the Depression I met all sorts of men and came to know them as men, and value their character. It gave me a deeper insight into men in the Army. It enabled me to evaluate much more accurately their worth, their state of mind and their reliability or dependability and it is something which in fact can be sensed if you have that understanding.

It’s not everybody who has that understanding, not everybody who can develop it. Many try, and they’re well meaning, but they still don’t get to the state where the men will like them, respect them and follow them. (I) know a certain officer.....I think he’s a wonderful bloke, but to the soldiers he was never a leader. He just didn’t understand. He didn’t have the ability to get down and talk to them and understand them as human beings. And that is absolutely essential. You treat your men as human beings...”

Colonel Duncan ‘Pansy’ Goslett, Ex 2/2nd Bn

What If?

This chapter is an indulgence and of it is purely speculative in every aspect.

The author found researching and writing this biography a very rewarding exercise however lost track of the times his mind wandered, and wishful thinking was the result. What if? Returning to the narrative, the end was always the same, no matter what research was done. What if he had lived? What stories might Ian have told if we had been able to meet him?

The obvious risks of operational service are death or disfigurement. Lesser known until recently are the emotional scars borne by those who had seen too much, were unable to unsee and simply tried to get on with life after the war with varying degrees of success. Had Ian survived Bardia, these risks would compound, perhaps affecting him physically or mentally sooner or later.

His death was unlucky, to say the least. Had he lived through the day at Bardia – what may have become of him? It is worth briefly exploring these possibilities in order to speculate ‘what if’.

We have found Ian was a capable and respected officer in the barracks and on operations; he was popular with his superiors, peers and subordinates; he was well enough connected. Ian’s performance in battle as a Company Commander prior to his death was sound to say the least. He had created and trained B Coy, he was performing his operational role effectively and doing so under the most trying conditions. He had a knack for organising complex undertakings, and a strong work ethic. He was a leader. It seems he had strong potential.

As it was, B Coy finished the first day essentially achieving its mission, without the key support of artillery or tanks, having faced far more difficult circumstances than expected.

We will briefly explore how his war may otherwise played out.

After Bardia

Capt Savage (A Coy) and Lt ‘Wadi Mac’ Macfarlane were both awarded the MC for their actions during the battle. Ian’s demonstrated conduct is not inconsistent with either of these other

officers' conduct on the day. Had Ian's battle continued in a manner consistent with the standard he was setting, he would have been seen as a success against strong odds.

Speculation: It is quite possible Ian would have been decorated, most likely an MC.

The 2/7th After Bardia

After Bardia, 2/7th Bn next fought at Tobruk where they attacked the eastern sector. Later, the Bn undertook garrison duties in Libya around Marsa Brega. This campaign cost the Bn 20 dead, including 15 KIA, 75 WIA and one POW.

Speculation: Most of the 2/7th's casualties were incurred at Bardia; his chances of becoming a casualty in the North African campaign would decrease. Had he survived the campaign as an experienced, competent Coy Comd he would expect promotion to Maj.

Greece & Crete

After a short rest, the 2/7th was committed to Greece in early Apr. Arriving via Athens and Larissa, the Bn established defensive positions around Thessaly. Their fight was brief as the Germans broke through the hastily established Allied defence, forcing a general withdrawal. Embarking from Kalamata on *SS Costa Rica* 26 Apr, the ship was bombed and had to be abandoned. They were transferred to Royal Navy destroyers and landed on Crete, where invasion was imminent.

Missing most of their equipment, (lost during the withdrawal and with the *Costa Rica*), the Bn was re-armed with weapons from two Australian artillery regiments. Following the German airborne assault on 20 May, the 2/7th became heavily engaged fighting parachute troops around Canea. It then counter-attacked at 42nd Street with a ferocious bayonet charge in concert with the NZ Maori Bn, resulting in heavy German casualties.

The 2/7th then covered the force's withdrawal to Sphakia with a three-day stand in the hills while the Royal Navy attempted to evacuate them by sea. These were hard and desperate days. Last to the beaches, they found Allied naval losses had mounted which caused the evacuation to be called off before the 2/7th could embark. Over 400 members of the Bn became POWs.

Several 2/7th soldiers later escaped. The CO, 'Myrtle' Walker, was captured after giving up his position on one of the last evacuation ships when it became clear the rest of the Bn could not board. They remained in captivity in POW camps in Greece, Germany, Austria and Poland, until Germany's surrender on 7 May 1945.

The Bn's casualties in Greece and Crete were heavy and at the end of the campaign, combined with POWs it had essentially been destroyed. The fighting in Greece resulted in 8 KIA, 7 WIA and 65 POW, while a further 27 were KIA on Crete, with 70 WIA and 433 POW.

The Author can't see Ian getting on the evacuation ship. If Ian had been present and having survived this phase unwounded, he would have chosen to remain with the 2/7th.

Speculation: It is most likely Ian would have become a POW with the 2/7th after Crete.

It appears most likely to the Author that, had Ian survived he would most likely have returned to Australia at war's end in 1945 as Major DIA Green MC, having been held as a POW in Germany after capture on Greece or Crete.

Minor Wounds, Courses, Promotions & Postings

Proven leaders were at a premium in the AIF for most of WW2. It was common for experienced officers who had proven their operational ability to be recommended or prepared for promotion. The wider career development required may have meant a posting to a 'staff job' on a Bde HQ, or Ian may have been sent on a more senior command and staff course of typically 2-4 weeks' duration. C&SC's were run often in British Schools in the Middle East and AIF officers were regular attendees.

In the wash up after Bardia, a small number of officers were found unsuitable for their roles. Replacements were also required for KIA and WIA officers; Ian may have found himself in another position; not necessarily with the 2/7th.

Ian may have received a minor wound, requiring hospital treatment but allowing a full recovery and eventual return to operations.

If any of the above was the case, Ian may have missed Greece, Crete and subsequent capture; perhaps being posted back to the 'Phoenix' which the 2/7th became. It was re raised using approximately 40-50 original personnel supplemented by reinforcements. Rebuilt in Palestine, the 2/7th then undertook garrison duties in Syria and then Ceylon before being transported back to Australia in Aug 1942.

Speculation: Lower chance of a course, a transfer, a promotion or WIA may have resulted in Ian missing Greece/Crete to return to Australia with the re raised 2/7th, most likely promoted to Maj.

Most of Ian's comrades who participated in the Battle of Bardia as Capts or Maj and demonstrated competence ended up as LtCol-Brig in 1945, and/or had been awarded MC/DSO.

Some were sent to Militia Bns in 1942 as either Coy Comd or CO. Examples are LtCol Phil Rhoden (A Company commander at Bardia, Phil took over 2/14th Bn as CO on the Kokoda Track in 1942), and LtCol Ralph Honner (another company commander at Bardia; Ralph took over as CO 39th Battalion at Isurava, Kokoda track in 1942).

Speculation: If Ian had returned to Australia in 1942 as a competent and experienced company commander, it is possible he may have been promoted LtCol and placed in command of a Battalion. Most of those Bns served in the South West Pacific Area against the Japanese, in New Guinea.

It should be remembered that any ongoing service as a battalion infantry officer in WW2, particularly in the SWPA involved ongoing high risks of sudden death or injury plus a high chance of contracting one or several tropical illnesses.

Had he reached this level, after that, who knows? He would have had a story or two to tell.

Civilian employment

Much of the above implies a return home and a return to 'civvy street' after 1945.

On their return, many returning soldiers found their outlook on life had completely changed the way they saw themselves and the world at large; many decided to change careers. For Ian, coming from a role leading 100-600 soldiers on operations would make returning to the bank in a clerical role look decidedly tame.

It is not possible to make any projections here, however with a pre-war background in the bank, a gift for leading and organising and a wartime role in a succession of leadership positions, new opportunities are likely to have opened to him. Arthur had hoped Ian would return to run the family business.

For many, a return to 'normality' and family life was not straightforward. Some managed, many struggled. Most chose to maintain very close relationships with their former comrades through personal contact and membership of the RSL.

Family

Ian expected to marry Jean on his return to Australia, however this would have been problematic given the Protestant/Catholic divide. Whether this would have resulted in a type of family exile is open to speculation, however there is at least one example of Arthur Green's sibling marrying a Catholic with just that result. Ian's siblings would have been less likely to follow suit.

Age



At the time of his death, Ian was 29 and at the peak of his fitness, however the physical demands of the role were great.

Additional to physical risks, operational service in the SWPA would almost assuredly result in a tropical disease. Whilst recovery was usually made, lifespans were usually shortened as a result. Ex POWs typically had similarly shortened lives as a result of poor diets for the duration of their captivity. We also know Ian smoked.

He might have retired in the early – mid-1970's between 60 and 65. If he shared Arthur's constitution it would be quite realistic to expect Ian living well into his eighties, meaning we might have had his presence amongst us until the mid-1990's.

Of course, it's easy to dream, but we'll never know.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them

Lest we forget.

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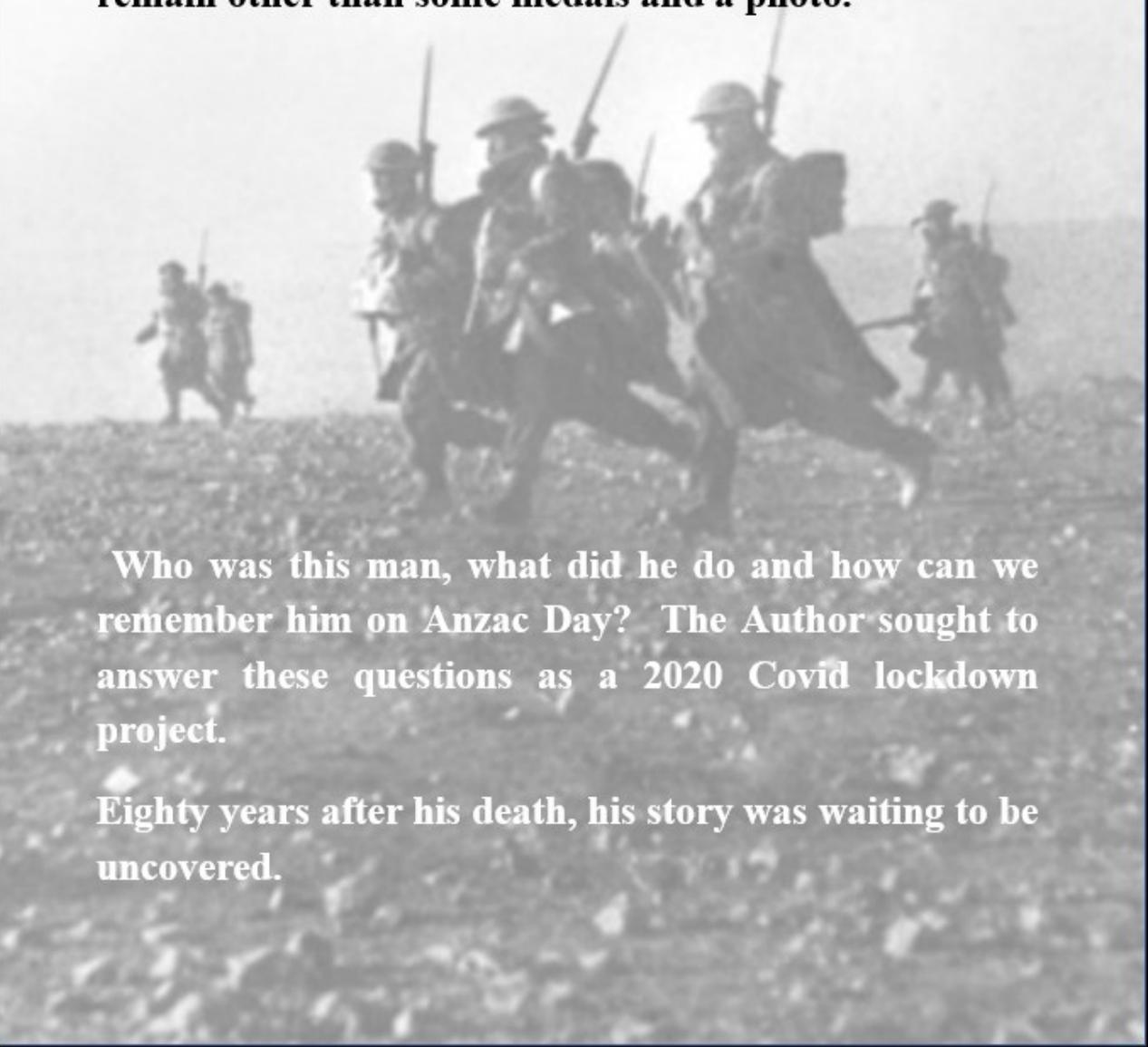
Suzanne Dowling

Jill Linklater

In 1939, D.I.A. 'Ian' Green was one of the first Australians to volunteer at the start of World War 2 after being a Citizen-Soldier all his adult life. They raised and trained an army, then took them to war.

Sent overseas on the first troop ship, he was killed during the Second AIF's first battle of the War – the Battle of Bardia.

The family bore their grief in silence; little seemed to remain other than some medals and a photo.



Who was this man, what did he do and how can we remember him on Anzac Day? The Author sought to answer these questions as a 2020 Covid lockdown project.

Eighty years after his death, his story was waiting to be uncovered.