

## CHAPTER 2

# TRAINING BETWEEN THE WARS

After the disbanding of the A.I.F. units at the end of World War 1 Australia was left with a Militia force and a small Permanent Army. Compulsory military training was abolished in 1929 in favour of a volunteer Militia force. This was called the Citizen Military Force or the C.M.F. The 3rd Division of the C.M.F. was based in Victoria and consisted of the 4th, 10th and 15th Infantry Brigades. One Field Ambulance serviced each Brigade and they were named the 4th, 10th and 15th Field Ambulances.

Australia had always maintained a small permanent army and in 1939 this force numbered approximately 3,500 men. These comprised largely former veteran W.W.1 men who were spread throughout the C.M.F. as well as manning permanent army training and defence stations. They were highly trained officers, N.C.O's and privates and one of their functions was training new recruits.



*Len Martin, Jack McGill  
& Lindsay Wallis.*

Militia training consisted mainly of night parades, week-end bivouacs and an annual camp of two weeks duration. In 1938 with the unsettled conditions in Europe and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria it was decided to double the strength of the militia force to 70,000 men. These were all volunteers but were enlisted for service only in Australia and its Territories. The area where the militia force could serve was later extended to anywhere south of the Equator.

The 10th Field Ambulance had a small nucleus of officers and men and had their headquarters in Sturt Street, South Melbourne. The 1939 Army List shows the following officers belonging to the 10th Field Ambulance : -

Lieut. Col. Furnell H.G. (*Commanding Officer*)  
Capt. Manson  
Capt. Gibb H.  
Capt. Johnston C.H.

Maj. McKenzie S.A.  
Capt. Smibert R.S.  
Capt. Bailhache  
Capt. Rosefield

*Care, Courage & Camaraderie*

Before the actual outbreak of the war the 10th Field Ambulance night training parades were held on Tuesday nights every second week at their Drill Hall in South Melbourne. Some week-end bivouacs were held and an annual two week camp. One such two week exercise was held on the Mornington Peninsula from the 18th to the 29th of March 1939. Also about this time the unit's headquarters were moved to a new Drill Hall on the corner of A'Beckett and William Streets, Melbourne. This was shared with the 4th Field Ambulance. The training consisted of drill, marching around the Flagstaff Gardens and included learning how to harness a horse using a wooden dummy. The unit still used horse drawn ambulances and some of the officers rode horses. At this stage the 10th Brigade consisted of the 24th and the 37/39th Battalions.

The militia units were just a nucleus of what would be required for active service. They were held together by dedicated men who saw the need to have a trained military force in the unsettled conditions that existed in the world at that time. Besides the officers shown above there were some permanent army N.C.O's and the volunteer N.C.O's and men.

In the 10th Field Ambulance apart from the Medical Officers mentioned above there were the following volunteer C.M.F. men:

Lieut. Les Martin	W.O. Tom Street
S/Sgt Lindsay Sampson	Sgt. Bob Crawford
Sgt. Jack Caldwell	Sgt. Len Martin
Sgt. Les Lindley	Cpl. Jack Stiglich
S/Sgt. Les Wilton	S/Sgt. Norm Douglas
Sgt. Alf Saunders	Pte. Ray Cook
S/Sgt. Geoff Dermer	Sgt. Jack McGill
Cpl. 'Anzac' Retford	Sgt. George Morley

There were others who did not continue long with the unit such as :

Ern Milton (Joined A.I.F.)	Tom Landy
Bobby Grigson (In charge of horses)	Lindsay Wallis
The English brothers	Ron Nott

*OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR TWO*

On the 3rd of September, 1939 England declared war on Germany and Australia did likewise. This galvanized the nation into action and plans were set in motion immediately to raise an expeditionary force and also to strengthen the home defence forces. The expeditionary force, the 2nd A.I.F., was raised by volunteers. Plans were made to compulsorily call up firstly 21 year olds to bolster the ranks of the militia units. Those compulsorily called up were called Universal Trainees or U.T's. Their training was initially to be on a rotating system with three months in camp and three months back at work whilst an-

other age group would be called for their initial training.

On the outbreak of war all aliens were imprisoned and the militia units were called on to guard the prison camps and also to guard strategic establishments such as coastal defences.

In January 1940 a training camp was held at Trawool on the Seymour-Yea road where the 10th Field Ambulance exercised with other militia units. Horse drawn ambulances were still in use then. Capt. Manson can be remembered at this camp mounted on his horse. Capt. Manson was lost when the Japanese torpedoed and sank the hospital ship "Centaur" just off the coast from Brisbane in May 1943.

The second A.I.F. was a special force of volunteers raised to serve anywhere in the world. The formation of this force initially caused a drain of personnel from the militia units. The second A.I.F. consisted of the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Divisions. The battalions, regiments and units in this force all had the designation 2nd before their battalion or unit number. So there was a 2/10th Field Ambulance attached to the 8th Division.

The majority of the 2/10th Field Ambulance personnel were captured at the fall of Singapore and spent the remainder of the war as prisoners of the Japanese. A small detachment of the 2/10th Field Ambulance were sent to New Britain under Major E.C. Palmer to provide medical services for the small Australian garrison. When the Japanese invaded New Britain and captured Rabaul early in 1942 some troops were able to escape. Major Palmer led a party of those who had escaped to the south coast of New Britain from whence they got in touch with Port Moresby and were rescued from Palmalmal Plantation in April, 1942. He was later promoted to Lieut. Colonel and took over as Commanding Officer of the 10th Field Ambulance when we arrived in Port Moresby in November 1942.

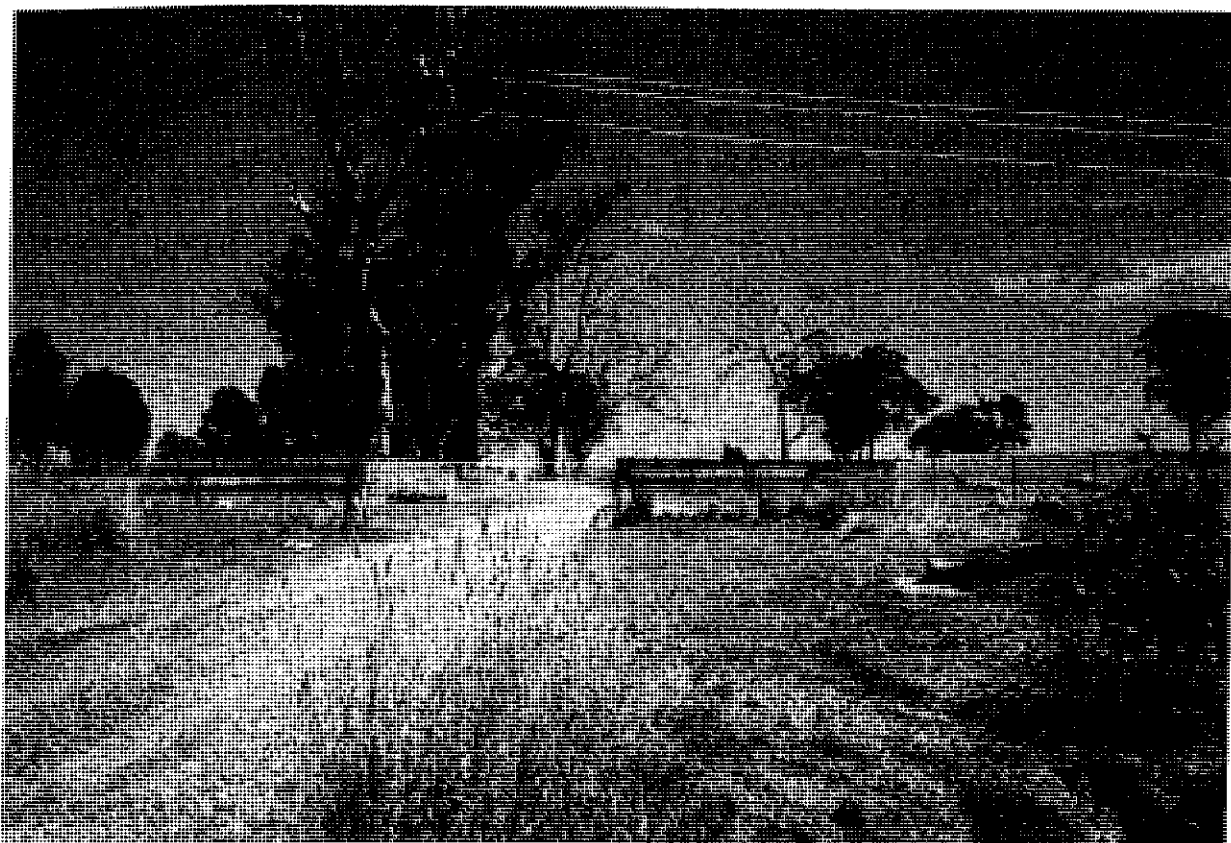
On 29th April, 1940 the 10th Field Ambulance received its first draft of universal trainees and went into camp at Seymour at what was known as Camp Site 17 alongside the 4th Field Ambulance. The trainees were all in khaki whilst the original militia men still had their blue dress uniforms with a red stripe down the side of the trousers. Again the transport section was all horse drawn. Special training was done in trenches forming what was known as the "Drake Brockman" line and ambulance trainees had to learn to carry a patient on a stretcher along a trench, keeping their heads down below the surface. This indicates the state of unpreparedness of our military forces for jungle warfare at the beginning of the war. This was all soon to change.

cane and appear at the door of his tent and surprise the young lad with, "Four times faster laddie, four times faster!"

A third camp followed from 31st July to 30 October 1941 and with further age groups having been called up the unit numbers were increasing. The unit was organized into three companies, Headquarters, "A" and "B" Companies and training became more intense. Physical training was given straight after reveille by Sgt. Len Martin and all benefited from this. Chest measurements were taken at the beginning of the camp and at the end and most troops registered a considerable expansion.

Andy McHattie recalls an incident at Mangalore which happened while on bivouac. He says, "*At Mangalore we had a blue heeler dog who had adopted us. I taught him to jump for a stick held out at shoulder height. One day Col. McKenzie was going crook about fellows going A.W.L. He got a bit worked up and started to wave his cane around. Bluey sat up, then went like a rocket for the stick. He made a beaut jump and took the cane out of Mac's hand. Bluey raced back and put the cane on the ground on my right then sat at attention next to me. The Colonel would not believe that he belonged to the Army and not just to me!*"

Our members were mostly from the eastern side of Melbourne but there was a sprinkling of country personnel. Their civilian occupations were as diverse as anyone could imagine. They ranged from orchardists, butchers, schoolteachers, shopkeepers, window dressers to accountants and bank managers. Weekend leave was granted each two weeks with half the unit going on leave each weekend. For some this was not good enough and the usual amount of A.W.L.'s occurred. Ted Young recalls being told by the C.O. on being paraded for being A.W.L. "You can't buck John Bull" - a favourite saying of the C.O. Six of the transport boys weighed up the consequences versus the lure of a "good time" and decided to take "extended time". Their story is told in the following poem composed by "Tich" Knight and sent in by Arthur Holliday. No one would have considered "Tich" to have the gift of the muses but special circumstances often bring out hidden talents:-



*Entrance to Nagambie Red Camp.*

### *SEYMOUR*

A new camp site had been established at Nagambie Road, Seymour known as Camp Site 2 and the January 1941 call up of universal trainees were camped there in orderly rows of tents with six men to a tent. The whole of the 10th Brigade, comprising now the 24th, 37th and 52nd Battalions plus engineers, artillery etc. were camped on this site. Training was carried out by a small number of officers, a few permanent army personnel and the more experienced N.C.O.'s. The training was general army drill, lots of route marches, some first aid lectures and practical work loading ambulances, fitting a Thomas Splint, applying tourniquets etc. By this time the unit had acquired one motor ambulance and no horses were in evidence. The roads and surrounding country all became well known to us, Hughes Creek, Guild's Hill and the gravel pits were all familiar ground. A small camp hospital was operated where sick or injured from the surrounding battalions, who could not be treated at their R.A.P., (Regimental Aid Post) were treated or hospitalized if necessary. This gave initial nursing training to many of our personnel.

Our Commanding Officer, Lieut. Col. S.A. (Stan) McKenzie was a strict disciplinarian, and foreseeing that we were soon to be engaged in a real war was always trying to instil a sense of urgency into his troops by reminding us that "the Japs are just beyond the gravel pits". He would see a young trainee idly walking across the parade ground and would quickly pick up his hat and his

cane and appear at the door of his tent and surprise the young lad with, "Four times faster laddie, four times faster!"

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At a camp at camp site two  
There the boys have a lot to do  
The C.O. there who has no hair  
Makes pretty speeches the boys to scare.

Six transport boys  
Who'd heard his noise  
On every single day  
Thought they'd go to Melbourne town  
And there they thought they'd stay.

For five whole days they had their ways  
And had a lot of fun  
And every one came back again  
Every one bar one.

Before their C.O. they did go  
And he said "This'll cost you dough"  
But there's one thing I'll let you know  
That one has gone to Bendigo.

The culprits were Arthur Holliday, Cec Barnes, Eric Ward, Gerald Black, Arthur Bentley and Ray Zumpe.

This camp ended on 30th October 1941 and a wind up concert and supper were organized to celebrate the occasion. A copy of the program, which was quite extensive, is shown on the next pages together with a number of attendees who signed the program. Bill Mullins gave a guitar and vocal item. Our singing quartet at that time consisted of Tom Landy, Neil Radcliff, Glad A'Court and Len Sparks. Dudley Fluck, an accomplished violinist gave a violin solo, Bob Chapman played a musical saw, Alex Murphy played his mouth organ and Tom Landy the Big Bassoon. Don Hiddleston performed some of his magic tricks. "Anzac" Retford and Eric Veith also gave items. Bill Mullins later left to join the 3rd Division Entertainment unit.

Instead of the whole unit disbanding at the end of the camp a cadre of three Officers, the C.O., Quartermaster and Captain Ian Wilson (who had just joined the unit.) plus 56 Other Ranks were kept in camp in readiness to reform the unit on short notice in the event of the world situation requiring it. In fact that situation did arise very soon with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941 and the subsequent entry of America into the war.

PEARL HARBOUR

The result of the bombing of Pearl Harbour and America's entry into the war was that all C.M.F. units were immediately mobilized for the duration of the war. In addition to existing members of the unit who were recalled to camp on 17th December, 1941 a large number of 18 year old trainees were called up and camped at what became known as "Boystown" and were given two weeks initial military training in the famous or infamous "bull ring". On the 45th anniversary of his initiation into "Boystown" on the 24th of January 1942 Dick Holmes remembered, " Typical of the hot summer days there, the wind started to blow late in the afternoon and the dust smothered the tents and the contents to say nothing of the food in the cookhouse. What an initiation ! Captain Butterworth, the O.C. of "Boystown" called a parade and all of us still in civilian clothes, were told that rag "pips" meant the same as metal "pips" and that we had to obey the orders of the young Lieutenant standing beside him."

Alan Patrick also on the subject of Boystown recalled the tents without floorboards, 8 men to a tent, no palliasses and small drains around the tents which were useless when it rained. On being allocated to the 10th Field Ambulance with six to a tent, floorboards and palliasses he felt he was in a 'club away from home' !

The 10th Field Ambulance received its allocation of new troops from this pool and the unit was almost brought up to full strength as far as numbers were concerned. Ted Young recalls telling the C.O that he did not want to be in an ambulance unit and the C.O's reply was, "Son, you're mine and you are going to stay".

At full strength a Field Ambulance capable of caring for 150 patients had an official strength of 14 officers and 230 other ranks, including 1 officer and 58 O/R's attached from the A.S.C. as transport personnel. Our complement of Officers was also boosted with the arrival of Captains A.B. Hewitt, G.J. Loughran, C.R. Copland and for a time Captain C.E.Willing. Medical supplies arrived and also more motor transport to put the unit on a near war footing. Training now became more intense with more emphasis on the medical side. Bivouacs were held with the Brigade and experience gained in collecting, treating and evacuating "casualties". On one of these bivouacs the issue of "bully beef" was found to be of World War 1 vintage, but still judged as "good and tasty" according to Capt. Ian Wilson. The camp set up had been changed with tents dispersed over the site instead of being in orderly rows and slit trenches were dug for every tent.

For a short time we had an Education Officer by the name of Stanley Brogden. He produced a unit Newsletter called "The Rotator". Unfortunately no copies





MUSICAL PROGRAM

Orchestra

Community Singing \*

1. All good pals & jolly good company
2. Kiss me goodnight Sergeant Major
3. There's a boy coming home on leave
4. Pack up your troubles

Guitar & Vocal - Bill Mallins

Quartet - Tom Hardy, Noel Radcliffe, Gled A Court & Lon Sparks

Violin Solo - Eto Flock

Magical Moments with Don Middleton

Maxwell Saw - Bob Chayman

Community Singing \*

1. Bless em all
2. Oh Johnny
3. Show me the way to G. home
4. Hursey Hursey

Spoons - Cpl Retford

The Sergeants will entertain

March Organ Solo - Cpl Alex Murphy

Song & Dance - Cpl Eric Voith

Big Bassoon - Tom Hardy

Community Singing \*

1. Quartermaster's Store
2. Requests

Request Items Various

Speeches

AUD LAIN SYNE

GOD SAVE THE KING



"A Lot of Gigs".

have survived. Stan transferred to the Army Education unit around about March 1942 and I understand later joined the R.A.A.F.

#### *WALLY'S FAILURE AT DARNING SOCKS EARNS HIM A WIFE*

After a fifteen mile route march on a blistering February day Wally Bryan and two of his mates, Don Hiddleston and Dicky Ryan returned to their tents with blistered heels and large holes in their socks. Their efforts to mend the holes only seemed to make matters worse so after consideration Don had a sudden inspiration. Why not write to the "Sun" and ask for volunteers to darn their socks. The letter was duly composed and the following notice appeared in the "Sun" under '**Soldiers' Appeals**' on the 19th February 1942.

"Anyone willing to darn the socks of three bachelor soldiers who have failed in their attempts to do the job themselves, may get in touch with Pte. D.C.Hiddleston, V132159, H.Q.Coy., 10th Field Amb., Camp Site 2, Seymour." In the first mail there were 185 replies. Overall they received over 300 replies and eighteen pairs of socks.

Not being able to personally thank all those who offered they asked the "Sun" to publish a notice of thanks. This duly appeared in the "Sun" on the 24th of February 1942 under the heading:

## 150 READY TO DARN SOCKS FOR SOLDIERS.

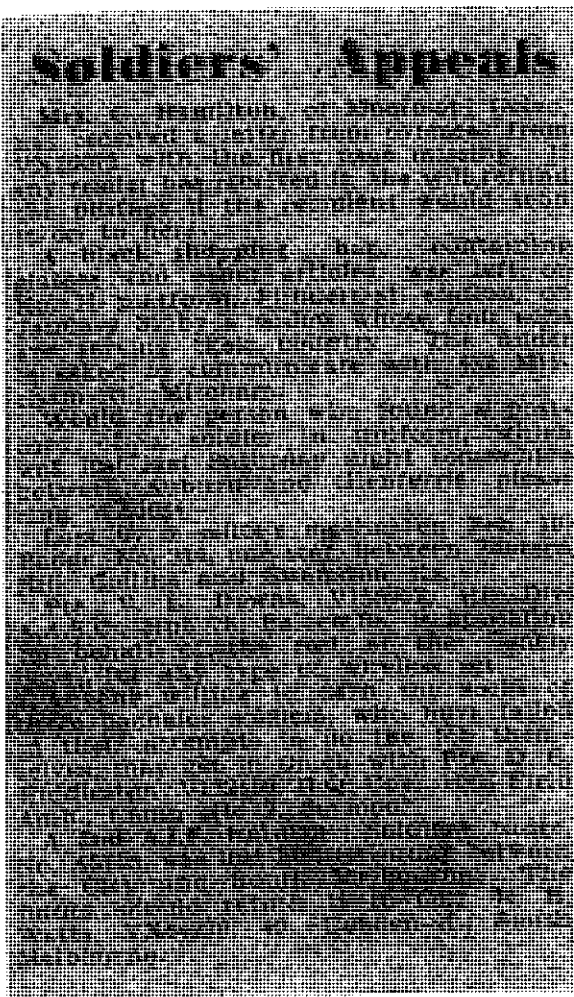
However, Wally Bryan did take the trouble to personally thank one of the kind volunteers by the name of Gwen Price. He recalls that when he first met her she had a dab of flour on her nose which Wally thought was very fetching. She explained that she had been cooking scones and invited Wally to sample one. He thought these just the most delicious scones he had ever tasted and love blossomed from there. They were married on the 16th of March 1946 and 52 years on were happily living in a retirement unit in Wantirna. Whilst this history was being written Wally passed away peacefully on the 3rd of November 1998.

By the end of our training at Seymour the Japanese had bombed Darwin, captured Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila and most of the Philippines and they had landed at Lae in northern Papua/New Guinea. In addition to the devastation caused by the surprise attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbour the British battle-ships *Prince of Wales* and H.M.S. *Hood* had been sunk in the Pacific. The position was grim indeed.

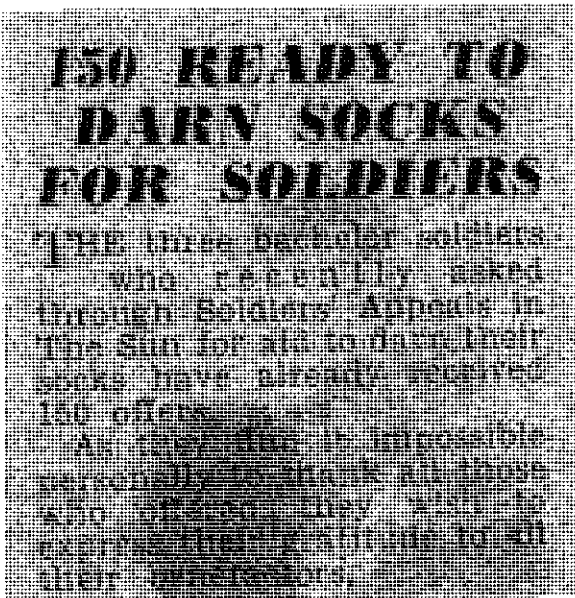
### BONEGILLA

The whole of the 3rd Division was to move north, initially to Bonegilla, and it was decided that as a training exercise this move would be made on foot. Prior to leaving Seymour our C.O. paraded the

unit and told us, "You know where you're going laddies, you know it is to place 'X'. You've got to get used to blood and guts." Our unit left Seymour on 27th March 1942, and arrived at Bonegilla on 8th April. The unit supplied medical services to the infantry and other units who moved with us. The regular marches and sleeping out under the stars on the cold frosty nights had the



Notices in "The Sun".





Wally and Gwen's Wedding.

beneficial effect of toughening up the troops. Going through Badaginnie a Mr. Cook, the storekeeper, stood beside the road with a four gallon tin of tea and as the boys marched past they dipped in their mugs for a lovely hot drink. He served hundreds of free drinks. Dick Holmes called on him after the war to thank him for his gesture.

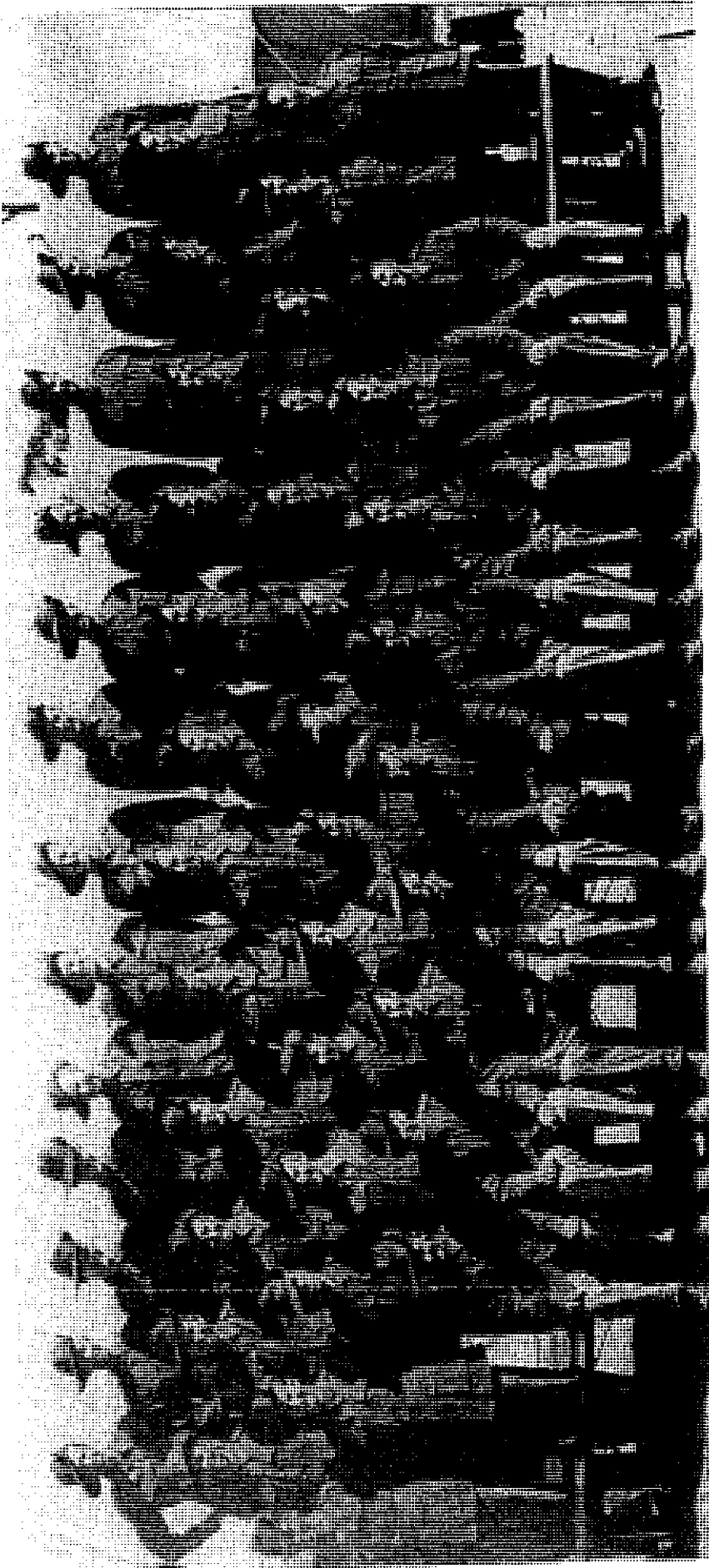
We were accommodated at Bonegilla in large galvanized iron huts and some recall the Jones brothers, strong country fellows, going the length of the hut swinging from the roof struts and causing the whole hut to shake. Training continued at Bonegilla and a full scale divisional exercise took place enabling the unit to function as a full field ambulance with A.D.S.'s (Advanced Dressing Stations) servicing each battalion R.A.P. (Regimental Aid Post) and an M.D.S. (Main Dressing Station) treating

patients and evacuating them to base.

By this time the Japanese had completed the capture of the Philippines and had landed in the Solomon Islands at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. However they did not fare so well on the sea. The battle of the Java Sea went in favour of the Japanese with the U.S. fleet losing the cruiser *Houston* in April, 1942 but the following month the tables were turned. On the 7th and 8th of May the battle of the Coral Sea was fought resulting in the decisive defeat of the Japanese naval force and most importantly the turning back of a large task force en route to capture Port Moresby. This was one of the turning points in the Pacific war.

### QUEENSLAND

We were not long at Bonegilla when it was decided to move further north and a camp site was chosen for the unit at Jimboomba, just south of Brisbane near Beaudesert. This move was made by train, a slow journey with meal stops at railway refreshment rooms and Red Cross volunteers serving meals and drinks. The main body entrained at Bandianna on 27th May, 1942, an advance party having left earlier to prepare the Jimboomba camp site. Here we were again camped in tents and underwent further training. Leave to Beaudesert was available on occasions and the motor train that ran between Jimboomba and



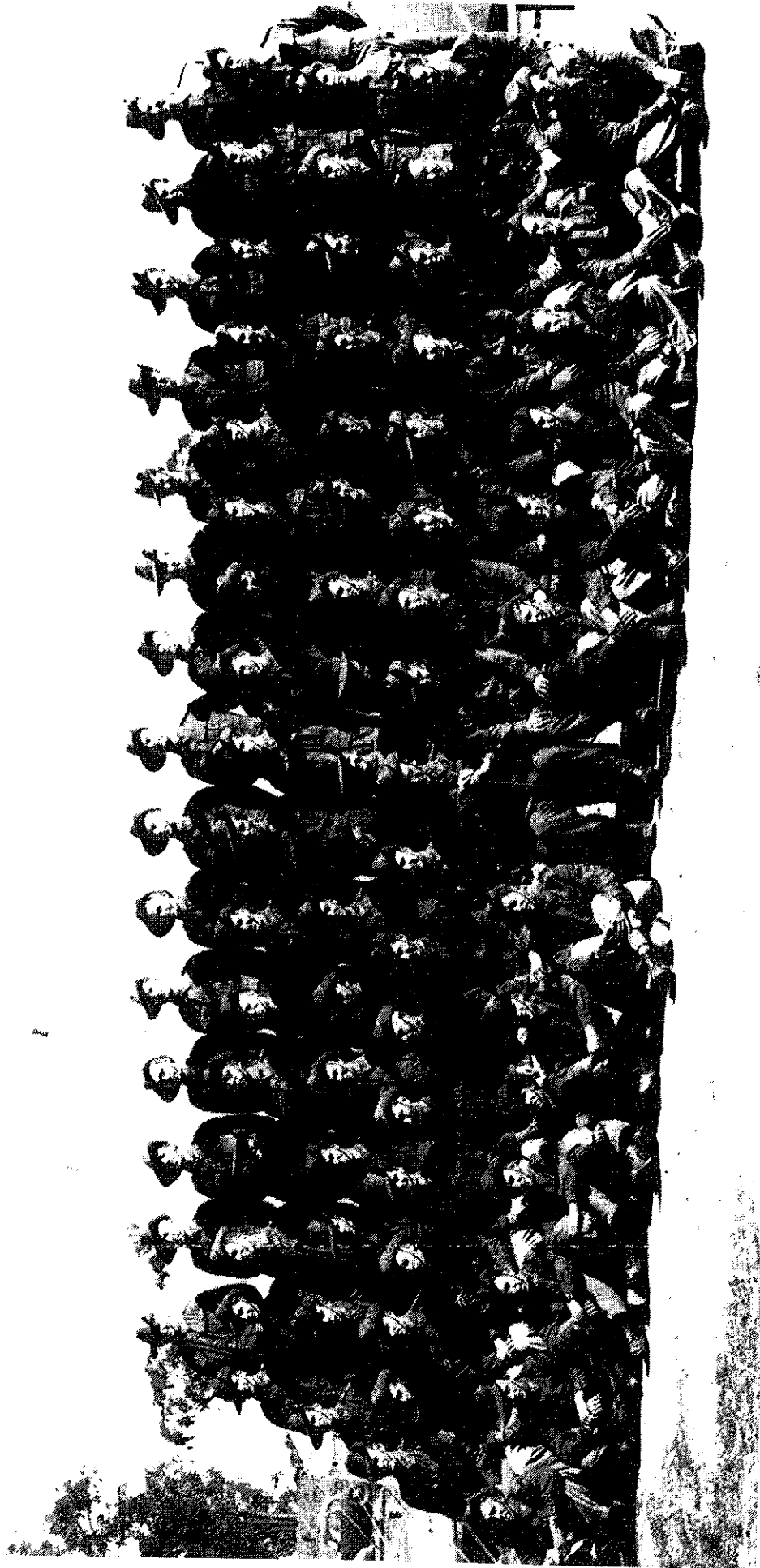
Group Photo taken at Seymour.

**Front Row:** Eric Morris, Stan Lucas, Syd Biffen, Bob Crawford, Capt. Willing, Merv Featonby, Frank McArdle, Anzac Retford, Allan Williams.

**2nd Row:** Ted Monot, Ron Handley, Alan Money, Wally Page, ??, Wally Bryan, Dutchy Hollands, Bertie Biggs, Ray Cook, Jack Allen, Jack Thompson, Alan Hocking, Bill Allen, Laurie Malkin.

**3rd Row:** Ralph Hallum, Russell Behrens, Bill Reid, Roy De Jarlais, Ray Crawford, Norm Hackett, Doug Potter, Alec White, Keith Goslett, Ted Tyrell, L.C.M. Hobson, Glad A'Court.

**4th Row:** John Lawrence, ??, Bill Dickson, Neil Douglas, Norm Wall, Dick Hogg, ??, Harold Grundy, Aub Crozier, Les Hadfield, Len Bryant, Jack Bacon, Norm Angus.



*Group Photo.*



*Despatch Rider - Arthur Holliday at Wangaratta during march to Bonegilla.*

## Chapter 2: Training - Between The Wars

Beaundesert will be remembered as the "Spirits of Salts". Allen Gadsden and Doug Johns found a novel way to return to camp one night after having missed the regular bus and decided to walk along the railway track. Remembering that a goods train came by each night about midnight and stopped near our camp they lit a fire on the line half way up a long hill and waited. The idea worked and the driver slowed to a crawl to pass the fire - after all it was wartime - enabling the two to hop on and hitch a free ride back to camp.

Syd Biffin recalls an inter unit football match at Beaundesert after which he was commended for his play by his captain, Emmett Spring who said, "you played a good game Syd". He added, "I couldn't have walked

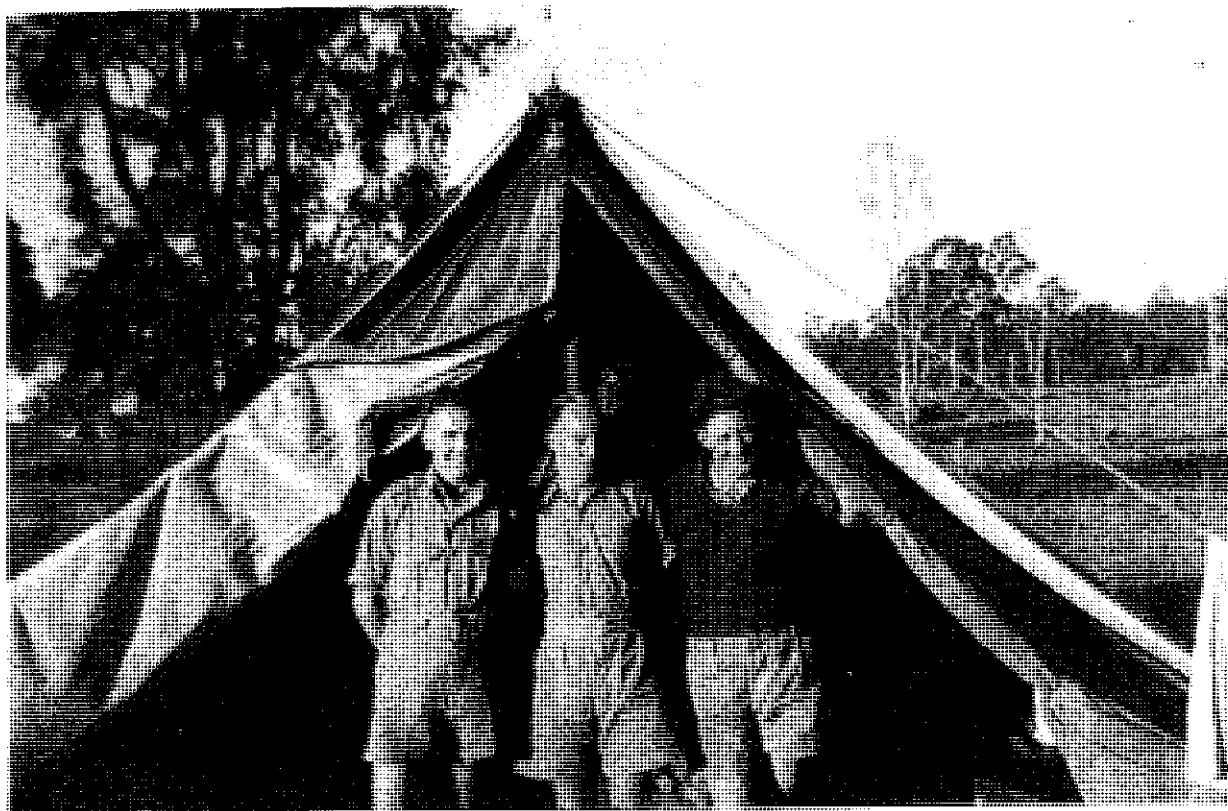
taller if Macarthur had given me the Purple Heart" and concludes with, "And that dear friends is how we held the "Brisbane Line." However the serious business of intensive training and preparing the unit for active service continued throughout this time.

Staff Sgt. Merv Featonby and Sgt. Jack McGill were promoted to the rank of Lieutenant as Bearer Officers whilst we were at Jimboomba.

We were there for less than two months when another order came to move further north and our next camp was just north of Maryborough, Queensland. The unit's motor transport complement had by this time been brought up to establishment and the move to Maryborough was carried out by our own transport, leaving Jimboomba on 27th July 1942. I was in a three ton truck driven by Jack Allen and going down the steep hill through the main street of Gympie Jack kept switching the ignition on and off to give full sound effects from back firing as the convoy passed through the town.

Nine days earlier the Japanese had landed at Gona and started their push across the Owen Stanley Range towards Port Moresby.





*Jimboomba. Kel White, Ken Phillips, Jack (Whacka) Thompson.*

At Maryborough the training became even more intense with many first aid lectures. One such lecture was lightened when Capt. Colin Copland asked a question of Pte. Finn and all others at the lecture laughed. Actually Pte. Finn was Pte. Tom Breden, who so strongly resembled Mark Twain's character Huck, that he was universally known as and called by that name, so much so that even the officers did not know his real name! Groups of orderlies were sent to Maryborough Hospital for training where a ward had been set apart to cater for troops in the area.

Another practical exercise was carried out when a message came through to the orderly room that there had been a serious level crossing smash at Maryborough with many injured. On arrival at the scene of the accident the "injured" who were found lying alongside the railway line turned out to be members of our own unit with tags on them describing their injuries. Captain Douglas McFarlane with a mighty leap cleared a post and rail fence in his eagerness to get to the scene. Merv Featonby recalls that some of the treatment the "patients" received was a little rougher than would normally be given. However, the unit response to this emergency was considered satisfactory.

We had two artists in our unit, Ron Crawford and Neil Douglas. In the army their talents lay dormant until the order was received that all the unit's tentage had to have camouflage markings on them. So what better men to choose to do this important task than Ron and Neil. Given complete scope as to designs and

supplied with pots of paint, mostly jungle green, they set to work. They must have impressed the authorities because Neil was transferred to the Queensland L. of C. Camouflage Training Unit. Ron was transferred out to the 22nd Field Ambulance. Neither Ron nor Neil went to New Guinea with us. After the war they were free to develop their artistic skills. Neil was instrumental in preserving in its natural state an area of Eltham known as the "Bend of Islands" and for his services to the Arts and Conservation was awarded the M.B.E. in 1975. Ron was a successful tonal artist and also conducted classes. Don Ludlam was one of his students. Just prior to his death in 1987 his self portrait was selected as one of the thirty finalists in the valuable Doug Moran National Portrait Prize.

### PRE-EMBARKATION

By 1st September, 1942 we moved back towards Brisbane and camped at Landsborough. It was here we became separated from the rest of the 3rd Division, having been made a Corps Field Ambulance attached to 1 Aust. Corps. The rumour mills were working overtime and the word was that we were about to embark for New Guinea. We received a number of reinforcements whilst here from the 4th Field Ambulance including-

Major Bernard McColl

Joe Manton

Noel Smith

George Perry

A.B. Williams

Arnold Lovell

Ron Roberts

Tom Eadie

Merv Blow

H.F.(Stormy) Gale

A.G. Phillipson

George Brown

John Stretton

Ron Woff

Harry Williams

Eric (Serg) Williams

Les Sanders

Wally Wilson

Stan Herbert

Bill Kennedy

R.V. Richardson

R.B. ( Jack ) Sullivan



*Swimming- Thought to be at Caloundra  
Kel White, John Garlepp, Ernie Strevens, Norm Wall,  
Jim Lyall, Aub Vimpani, Noel Norton, Geoff Hingston,  
Ron Sincock & Ron Handley.*

When the 4th Field Ambulance boys joined us they were often mystified to hear the expression, "UP THE SQUARE". No one seemed to know either the meaning or the origin of the saying. After the war "Pop Cook" enlightened us as to it's origin. He wrote : "*This is how it started.*"

*Care, Courage & Camaraderie*

*We ( the unit ) were at Jimboomba, and 'A' and 'B' boys went out on a stunt, leaving only H.Q. in camp. Those two likeable sergeants, Johnny Caldwell and Jack Chenhalls were the only sergeants left in camp. Rather than dine alone, they came and ate in our mess tent.*

*My very dear friend, the late Don Hiddleston and I immediately started 'acting the nanny' as follows "What are sergeants doing in our mess. Why don't they stick to their own. We'll throw them out, we'll have their blood. We'll slay them on the parade ground. We'll turn it into a bloody square. We went on until we got tired of it and then dropped it.*

*Then a bit later when I was on the water cart delivering water, ( remember all those tins and buckets that suddenly appeared ), I started yelling out 'Up The Square'. Gradually I started getting answers, and when 'A' and 'B' boys returned, I took it to their areas and so 'Up The Square' was born".*

The health of our C.O. at this time became a problem. He became ill and whilst at Landsborough he was hospitalized. He never rejoined the unit. Major Gavin Johnson took over temporary command of the unit. At Caloundra, a beach resort, there was a holiday house available to the unit and some personnel were fortunate enough to have a few days recreational leave there. The beach however was all covered with rolls of barbed wire as a deterrent to any would be invaders.

Ray (Pop) Cook was as usual on the Water Cart and whilst at Landsborough had to go to Caloundra to obtain the water. He tells the following story, "*Murdoch McMillan was driving the truck. A storm broke, rain, hail and trees flying through the air. One tree jammed under our front wheels - we came to a sudden stop. Murdoch turned to me and said, "Am I as white as you Pop?" My reply, "If I'm any whiter than you Murdoch, I sure am white!"*

Ray was one of the great personalities of the unit and the originator of many of the rumours circulating from time to time. These became known as "Water Cart Whispers". Sadly he passed away in 1997 while this history was being prepared.

While at Landsborough and just prior to embarkation six of our members who had not turned 19 years of age were called out, after we had been issued with jungle greens, and told that because of their age they would not be going to New Guinea with the unit and were to be sent back to their home state, Victoria. They were :

Pte. Young R.F.  
Pte. Green R.G.  
Pte. Young E.P.

Pte. White N.G.  
Pte. Smith R.W.  
Pte. Breaden T.A.

They were duly transported back to Victoria to a staging camp at Caulfield where they were told they were not required until the following morning. Without waiting any further, those whose homes were in Melbourne decided to go home for the night and to be on parade first thing the next morning. In the morning they lined up with other troops on parade and found that they were in double trouble. Firstly they had been A.W.L overnight without a leave pass and secondly they were regimentally "undressed" with their jungle greens and not the standard khaki ! They were then sent to Wangaratta to an A.A.M.C. training camp. The training unit was organized into three companies, A, B, and C with A being the raw rookies and C those completing their training. They were placed in C Company and repeated some of their basic training and were soon ready for re-allotment. They kept telling those in authority that they wanted to be sent to back to the 10th Field Ambulance and by this time most had turned 19. Two of the six, Ptes. White and Green did not rejoin the unit but the remaining four were shipped to New Guinea and rejoined the unit early in 1943 at Oro Bay. By this time the unit was in need of trained reinforcements owing to sickness in their own ranks.

The following story related by Dick Holmes shows how by the generosity of Lieut. Les Wilton our Quartermaster, (a quality not normally shown by Quartermasters) he was able to wangle two visits to his sister instead of one. His story is as follows -

*One day at Landsborough the duty N.C.O. called out for me and instructed me to report to the acting C.O., Major Johnson. I duly entered his tent office and was informed to my complete surprise that a signal had been received from A.A.H.Q. with instructions that I was to be permitted to proceed to Brisbane by the first train on 8th October, 1942.*

*Dressed in my uniform and newly dyed jungle green belt, gaiters and haversack I arrived in Brisbane. There were many stares from soldiers in khaki!*

*This trip had been arranged by my sister Meg who was then a sergeant at A.A.H.Q. She introduced me to various "brass hats" including Colonel Steele who confirmed that I was going to New Guinea and said, "Be sure to take a tin of Johnson's baby powder!"*

*Two days after my return we were instructed by the Q.M. to take all surplus blankets to a canvas covered 3 ton truck where we heaved them in. When my turn came to toss mine in the Q.M., Les Wilton couldn't hold his curiosity any longer and said, "how did you get leave to Brisbane?" so I said "my sister organized it!" Astonished he said "what's her name?". I said "Meg", to which he said "I used to go to school with a Meg Holmes at Canterbury" He then said "How would you like to go and see her again?" Next thing I was up*

*Care, Courage & Camaraderie*

*in the truck and the blankets kept coming in and I was told to keep low and was covered over! In due course the truck with the Q.M. proceeded out on the Bruce Highway and when at a sufficient distance from camp I was uncovered and so got to Woolloongabba where we handed in all the blankets and then went to see Meg at A.A.H.Q.*

*If you recall seeing a grey Chevrolet sedan staff car circling Ascot Racecourse the day before our departure it was Meg who came to say farewell and, sworn to secrecy, I was told exactly where we were to be sent with the alternatives should circumstances alter it."*

The situation in New Guinea was very fluid at this stage with the Japanese landing at Gona on 21st July, 1942 and their push across the Owen Stanley range towards Port Moresby during August. They also attempted a landing at Milne Bay on the Eastern tip of New Guinea but by the 5th September, 1942 they had been repulsed by Australian troops from the 7th and 18th Brigades, suffering their first defeat on land since their expansionist forces had swept through South East Asia and into New Guinea and surrounding islands. They were again repulsed in the Owen Stanley range at Ioribaiwa Ridge on 28th September. The units responsible for this repulse were the 16th Brigade of the 7th Division plus the 3rd Battalion of the 14th Brigade. The Japanese had reached this point where they were actually within sight of the bay on which Port Moresby is situated and from there a mere 300 miles separated them from the Australian mainland. Eventually the Japanese were forced back the way they had come, over the Owen Stanley Range, beyond Kokoda, to their coastal area bases of Gona- Buna- Sanananda.

Casualties in these two campaigns were heavy not only as a result of the fierce resistance from the Japanese suffering their first defeat on land, but also as a result of malaria, dysentery and other tropical diseases. Added to this the nature of the terrain where the fighting took place, on the one hand in the steep mountains of the Owen Stanley Range and on the other the swampy coastal plain it can be seen that the demands on the limited medical units in the area were heavy. As reported in "New Guinea Action", "Our boys had two grim foes to conquer : New Guinea and the Japanese - nature at its cruellest and mankind at its meanest".

Colonel Kingsley Norris in his report on the medical services during the Owen Stanleys campaign describes the Kokoda trail as follows:-

*"There was but one axis of withdrawal - a mountain track which defies adequate description. Before the campaign, this route had been considered passable only to natives or trained district officers.*

*Imagine an area of approximately 100 miles long - crumple and fold this into a*

series of ridges each rising higher and higher until 7,000 feet is reached, then declining in ridges to 3,000 feet - cover this thickly with jungle, short trees and tall trees tangled with great entwining savage vines - through the oppression of this density cut a little native track two to three feet wide, up the ridges, over the spurs, around gorges and down across swiftly flowing happy mountain streams.

Where the track clammers up the mountain sides, cut steps - big steps, little steps, steep steps - or clear the soil from the tree roots. Every few miles bring the track through a small patch of sunlit kunai grass, or an old deserted native garden, and every seven or ten miles build a group of dilapidated grass huts - as staging shelters - generally set in a foul offensive clearing. Every now and then leave beside the track dumps of discarded putrefying food, occasional dead bodies and human foulings.

In the morning flicker the sunlight through the tall trees, flutter green and blue and purple and white butterflies lazily through the air, and hide birds of deep throated song or harsh cockatoos in the foliage. About midday and through the night pour water over the forest, so that the steps become broken and a continual yellow stream flows downwards, and the few level areas become pools and puddles of putrid black mud. In the high ridges about Myola, drip this water day and night over the track through a foetid forest grotesque with moss and glowing phosphorescent fungi."

### EMBARKATION

This is the background to the unit's preparation to embark. The order finally came on 29th October, 1942 and we moved from Landsborough to Ascot Race-course awaiting shipping.

On 31st October we boarded our vessels, half the unit on the M.V. *Maetsuyker*, and the other half on S.S. *Both*, both Dutch vessels with Dutch officers. The accompanying officers were divided between the two ships as follows:

#### *Both*

Major Gavin Johnson  
Captain Ian Wilson  
Captain Emmett Spring  
Captain Colin Copland  
Lieut. Les Wilton  
Lieut. Merv Featonby

#### *Maetsuycker*

Major B. H. McColl  
Captain Harry Francis  
Captain F.T. Barber  
Lieut. Jack McGill

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Some of the transport personnel listed below, with the unit's vehicles embarked several days later on the "Jessie Applegate" bound for Milne Bay.

Lieut. Lloyd Stuart	Cpl. Ken Gordon
Cpl. John Grant	Pte. Keith Flintoff
Pte. Des Rea	Pte. Norm Hart
Pte. Cec Kelly	Pte. W. D. Sealey
Pte. Keith Goslett	Pte. S.J. (Tich) Knight
Pte. Bill Schlenker	Pte. Ted Nicholas
Pte. R.S. Riddell	Pte. Dave Johnston
Pte. Murdoch McMillan	Pte. Ray Zumpe

The *Jessie Applegate* was a liberty ship with no facilities for carrying troops. Lieut. Lloyd Stuart recalls the voyage in a recent letter reproduced in part here:

*" When we embarked from Brisbane I know the bulk of the transport section sailed off in your cruise ships - cabins and all modern cons and I and about a dozen of my boys along with all our transport were loaded onto one of the new Liberty ships along with the rest of the transport from the other units in the convoy. Very spartan conditions on board. No cabins for us, we roughed it on deck or slept in the ambulances. However, we were able to use the Wiles Cooker for meals. From Brisbane we made it into Townsville harbour and anchored off Magnetic Island where we stayed for at least four weeks. This I think was about the time of the Kokoda Trail battles and the clean up after the Milne Bay action when the Japs were being pushed back along the coast to Sanananda and back out of the mountains to Buna and Gona. After our sojourn at Townsville we were taken to Milne Bay and off loaded into a large transport park where the vehicles from all the units pushing up the coast were being held. We were at Milne Bay quite some time before we were shipped around to Oro Bay minus our vehicles where we met up with the rest of the unit. After camping there a day or so we all then walked the 14 or so miles to Soputa where the unit took over the camp hospital, or whatever it was, covering the final push.*

*The only transport we had at Soputa were several jeeps which were fitted with steel frames enabling one stretcher case to be moved. It was not until the unit moved back to Dobodura and established the camp hospital that the full complement of transport caught up with us."*

He surely had his tongue in his cheek when he described the *Both* and *Maetsuycker* as "cruise ships with all mod cons"!



*Transport Section, Group Photo, Seymour.*