

The Second World War – My Story

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Part 1

The Commencement of War 1939 - 1942

When war commenced I was employed by G.J. Coles & Co. Ltd. in the Buying Records Department of their Head Office. This was a section which kept all the records for buying and selling of goods.

Soon after, this Department was involved with areas connected with the war effort. Mr. A.W. Coles originally commenced the organisation which became the Australian Canteen Service. They bought and arranged distribution of goods to canteens in Australia and in New Guinea. The details were all set up in our office and were based on our own purchasing and ordering systems - order forms were exactly the same as ours. The work involved to do this was all done in our office, mostly after hours and all voluntary. Later Mr. A.W. Coles became Chairman of the Rationing Commission and he took staff from our office and used the office in setting up this Commission. Also during 1940, as a qualified Accountant I was asked to volunteer to work two nights a week from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Navy Office at Victoria Barracks to assist them with their personnel records and general accounting.

During 1940 I worked almost every night, either at Coles on canteen details or on our own work; or at the Navy Office.

In late 1940 all males 18 to 30 years old had to register to be available for war service. I was called up to attend a camp at Seymour with the 10th Field Ambulance from early January 1941 to 23rd April 1941 - a 3-months camp. The 10th Field Ambulance was one of the three Field Ambulances of the 3rd Division.

The Beginning of War Service and Training in Australia

1. First 3-Months Training Camp Nagambie Rd. Seymour. 23rd January 1941 - 23rd April 1941

We reported on 23rd January to the Drill Hall in Ringwood - were allotted to Units, received Medical Examination, completed an Enrolment Form, and left by train for Seymour. We were to attend a 3-month camp of Continuous Training and were supplied with two singlets, two underpants, two pairs socks, two towels, plus uniform and our plain clothes were to be despatched to our home. We had to supply our own personal items such as shaving, hair brush and comb, soap, toothbrush and paste, a cardigan, and braces or belt. The 10th Field Ambulance consisted of a small nucleus of Officers and Other Ranks, some permanent army officers who had attended earlier 3-months camps. It consisted of two companies "A" and "B" plus a Head Quarters unit. Some officers were Medical Officers, and the Commanding Officer was Colonel S.A. McKenzie. We spent most of this three months doing route marches, general drill training, and some first-aid under the control of a Regimental Sergeant Major who was in the permanent army.

We got to know the country around the camp well with day after day marches, especially to the gravel pits, along the road to Nagambie. The CO was always reminding us the Japs were just over the road at the gravel pits.

The camp closed on 23rd April 1941, and we were reminded that a further call-up and camp would probably be held later in the year.

2. Second 3-Months Training Camp. 31st July 1941 - 30th October 1941

The second call came in just over three months and we were sent to Seymour to the same camp on 31st July. Further age groups had been called to attend this camp so the numbers were larger than in the first camp.

The routine was similar to the first camp with more route marches, drill, first-aid lectures. We attended these for six days a week then had a rest day, called a make-and-mend day, when we had to do all our washing and mended our clothes when necessary. Our boots had to be cleaned before the first parade each morning, and all had to be ship shape for the CO's inspection.

We had six in a tent and were in the charge of a corporal who had been with the unit for some time so he was able to keep us in good order (Corporal Bob Crawford). One of the new call-up men in our tent could not tie up his own boot laces and was not very good at dressing himself so we had to help him. We did not see him again after the end of this camp.

We had amongst our members several good entertainers, so had a farewell concert at the end of the camp on 29th October. Items included:

Guitar and Vocal,
Violin,
Mouth Organ,
Magician,
Community Singing.

Before the camp dispersed on 30th October 1941, I was called to see the CO and he told me I was required for full time duty from 6.30 a.m. on 31st October 1941, so instead of returning home with most of the other boys I had to remain.

3. Full-Time Duty from 31st October 1941

I was also appointed a clerk, which meant a few shillings extra pay, and was allotted to "B" Company as their Company Clerk. There were six clerks in a Field Ambulance:

1 Sergeant Clerk at Head Office
1 Clerk at Head Office
1 Corporal and 1 Clerk "A" Company
1 Corporal and 1 Clerk "B" Company.

So in addition to the usual route marches and other training I also had to learn the duties of a clerk in the Company. To do this I spent most of the time in the Head Office, called the “Orderly Room” and worked with the Sergeant.

I had to learn the main parts of AMR&O (Australian Military Rules and Orders), a huge 1000 page book. The CO often had to refer to this for assistance in the everyday running of the unit. The unit had over 300 (when full strength), split into two companies of about 100 and nearly 120 in Head Quarters and these Head Quarters men were mainly Quartermasters, Hygiene, Transport, Dental etc.

It was intended to bring the unit up to full strength as soon as possible and this was done early in 1942 with the drafting of a large number of 18-year-olds.

4. Training Camp Site 2 Nagambie Rd., Seymour.

The task of splitting the unit into HQ and A & B Companies was soon commenced and intensive training carried out daily with many long route marches in the surrounding district. Often a whole company were out together for a week, resting and sleeping wherever we finished the day’s march. Food was supplied by vehicle from the Unit Camp and rations were mainly “bully beef and biscuits”, sometimes for the three meals of the day.

The CO was quite a stickler for discipline and he also believed all personnel should move quickly even if they were not on duty. Often he sat in his office, and would see a young 18-year-old walking idly from tent to tent or to the Mess Hut, and would quickly put on his hat, pick up his cane and go out yelling “four times faster laddie” to the surprised lad. It certainly had the effect of smartening up the unit.

Leave during the week-end was sometimes granted on a roster basis and trucks took us to Seymour station. Many members of the unit went “AWOL” (absent without leave) and the CO would see them from his office walking or

running over the paddocks towards Mangalore station where they would catch a train to Melbourne on Friday evening, and return on Sunday. The CO was aware of this and often called a roll-call parade and those missing without leave were paraded on Monday and either fined, given extra duties or sent away to a detention camp run by the Provosts (Military Police).

5. March to Bonegilla - Commenced 24th March 1942

It was decided the unit would move with the 3 Division to Bonegilla (near Albury) and as a Training Exercise it was decided we would march there. So we packed up all our gear, carried it on our back all the way to Bonegilla where we arrived 8th April 1942 (16 days).

We marched solidly and were always tired out and slept well at night - I remember one night camping under pine trees and making a soft bed from pine needles - it was greatly appreciated. We took back roads after crossing the Hume Highway and were in the hilly country around Yackandandah - so it was quite strenuous.

At Bonegilla we settled in to barracks, army huts which provided permanent accommodation, and we realised this was only temporary.

6. Move by train from Albury to Queensland 27th May 1942

We moved by train, a slow journey, to a small place called Jimboomba, south of Brisbane near Beaudesert. Here we camped in tents until 25th July 1942 (just on two months). I remember it being icy cold here especially the frosty mornings. On 25th July 1942 we moved to Maryborough, north of Brisbane and here we camped well outside the town in a forest. It was warmer here and we spent our little while here completing our training, including a lot of first-aid lectures. I remember one exercise we had. There was a telephone call to say there had been a serious train smash at the level crossing at Maryborough, and there were quite a few injuries. Could we send ambulances and qualified first-aid personnel to assist the civil authorities. I took the message and passed it on to Major Johnson our 2nd-in-Command. It was arranged for ambulances

and staff to be urgently sent and on arrival there it was found to be just an exercise, arranged by our CO and he only told about 12 soldiers who went to the area with him and pretended to have injuries and were lying in the grass along the railway line waiting to be rescued. The exercise was to test the time we would take to react to an emergency.

7. On 1st September 1942 we moved to Landsborough

This was nearer Brisbane and here we made preparation to go overseas to New Guinea. The unit had a holiday house at Caloundra on the coast not far away and a few staff were sent there each week to have a rest on the beach. I went but had no sooner arrived and had to return as the message came to be ready to embark. On 29th October 1942 we left Landsborough for Ascot to await embarkation. We were there two days before going on board.

(See next section “New Guinea” for continuation).

Part 2

1942 - 1944 With the 10th Australian Field Ambulance in New Guinea

During the period 23rd November '42 to 28th February '43 the above unit was preparing and being actively engaged in the Buna/Sanananda area and the CO of the Unit wrote a detailed report which is included in the Unit War Diary.

This report has been used for some of this story, together with my personal remembrances of some of the prior events which took place on the journey to Port Moresby from Australia and also during the various actions in New Guinea.

The Story of the Journey from Australia to Port Moresby

The unit had been assembled in the Landsborough area for some weeks waiting movement to New Guinea. During this time we lost our CO Lt. Col. S.A. McKenzie. Later Lt. Col. Palmer who had been in Rabaul at the time of the Japanese invasion but had escaped, with the assistance of the natives, to New Guinea became our new CO. The unit was fully trained and in perfect physical condition with plenty of route marches etc. (Refer Appendix A for details of Col. Palmer's escape from Rabaul).

The unit embarked at Brisbane on 29/10/1942 in two vessels SS "BOTH" and MV "MAETSUYCKER", along with troops and equipment of an Infantry Brigade and other troops. The intention of the journey was to disembark on the northern coast of New Guinea in the Buna area and to assist to drive the Japanese forces from this area where they were menacing Port Moresby - they had been driven back in the Owen Stanley Ranges at Kokoda and Moresby had been saved but the threat remained. I was on the "MAETSUYCKER". Shortly after leaving Brisbane the two vessels were ordered to Townsville to await Navy escort. On arrival in Townsville the ships anchored outside the harbour and there we waited for two weeks. The only recreation was playing "Housie" and this went on almost day and night (for money, and the

organisers made a tidy sum which was banked before leaving Townsville). On board, my job was unit runner and this meant sitting on the floor of the orderly room (office) to take messages to our acting CO Major Johnson. Many of the troops slept on deck as it was hot and humid and smelly down in the holds where we slept in double bunks, one above the other. The ships were Dutch vessels used in the island trade with Java, and the islands of what is now known as Indonesia. Both ships were still used after the war and frequently visited Australian ports. (Refer Appendix B) While at Townsville we were taken off the ship on two occasions for a march around the town area, this was quite a task - barges were used to transport to the wharf. All the troops on the "BOTH" were disembarked and the ship fumigated because of an outbreak of dysentery. By now we were all bored and getting very soft. The intensive training we had done just before in the Landsborough area in Queensland was all being wasted away. Various reports were around as to why we did not proceed but we do know the land campaign in the Milne Bay area was bogged down and until this was cleared of Japs we couldn't proceed to the north coast. Also all Navy vessels were occupied in naval action in the Coral Sea area. At the end of two weeks our escort - destroyer "ARUNTA" - arrived and we set sail. The escort vessel moved ahead and across our path day and night as there were Jap submarines around.

The end of the week found us in Port Moresby harbour. Here we were subjected to nightly air-raids and a few in the day-time. Again we were anchored in the bay quite a distance from the shore. No berth was available, in any case it would be too dangerous to remain at a berth. Soon we were taken off ship each second day for a march around Port Moresby. This was our first experience of the real tropical heat and it was very difficult to walk, or march, for any distance. Before we went back on ship we were able to buy bottles of cordial which helped us to drink the poor water on board. We were all very soft and the heat really knocked us.

By the end of two weeks there was no possibility of proceeding by sea so we were all taken from the ship to the 2/9 Australian General Hospital in Moresby where we were attached on 29th November 1943 and commenced working with hospital staff. Our sleeping quarters were a little 2-man tent which we had to put up wherever we could find a flat piece of ground, or a relatively flat piece, on the side of a hill.

About the second week in December the unit was instructed to provide a detachment to work with HAMMER FORCE in the Buna area. The detachment was to consist of:

2 officers, Major Johnson, Captain Copland
28 O/R's, including Theatre Assistants and
Major Yeats, a surgeon.

The detachment was to be flown to Dobodura near Buna in two planes with stores and equipment. I was included in this detachment.

Getting away from Moresby took some time - we had to be early on the airstrip to await a plane. Then when we were aboard and off, the journey was often cancelled when we got to the pass over the Owen Stanleys owing to cloud or enemy activity. I think we had two or three attempts and then succeeded on 17th December. I still remember the landing at Dobodura, in thick mud and slush and we had to get out as quickly as possible so the plane could return to Moresby before the pass was again closed. The plane slewed and slithered all over the place and it was quite scary for us. We walked with all our gear from Dobodura towards the coast near Cape Endaidere - this walk was in the night, pitch dark, hardly see a step ahead, along a narrow jeep track which was muddy and full of holes and ruts. Our two jeeps were full of stores, so the drivers were the only ones not walking - many were distressed on the long walk (or it seemed a long one in the dark). On arrival we just flaked out until the morning. I remember sleeping in a small space in a store tent that night - how the tent got there I don't know.

On 18th December the detachment moved across the coast road via Hariko to a position 3 miles behind Cape Endaidere. This movement was made by foot in the dark and we just followed the leader, and were all exhausted on arrival and slept where we could for the rest of the night.

Here a Dressing Station was set up alongside 22 U.S. Portable Hospital. HAMMER FORCE had with it a detachment of 2/5 Australian Field Ambulance; 3 officers and 23 O/R's. This detachment had moved with HAMMER FORCE (18 BDE HQ, 2/9

BN, 2/10 BN) from Milne Bay, and had set up a Dressing Station 1 mile behind Cape Endeidere. Our surgical team and equipment was moved to 2/5 Dressing Station where a theatre was set up in a U.S. Pyramidal Tent and surgery commenced.

The remainder of our detachment worked in co-operation with 22 U.S. Port Hospital, who were considerably under strength, and dealt mainly with sick. Battle casualties were handled at the 2/5 Dressing Station. I was engaged in clerical duties and assisting in care of sick and wounded (a 24 hour a day task). On 23rd December 22 U.S. Port Hospital moved alongside 2/5 Dressing Station and we prepared to move with them.

On the night of 23rd December an attack was made by Japanese 'E'boats on a U.S. schooner off the coast. The 'E'boats were engaged by coastal defence guns and there was a fair amount of firing, leading to rumours of a Jap landing in the rear of the force. As practically all the units around our Dressing Station had already moved there was concern of our being surrounded and cut off. Preparations were made to move back to a 25 pounder Troop.

This incident began just on dark and the first we knew was when bullets began to hit our tents and we sought shelter behind trees. The firing continued for some time and only ceased when the 25 pounders began firing out to sea. Rumours also said the Americans were firing on us as they had mistaken the location of Jap troops who were a short distance further along the coast. However, the rumours proved wrong, and we found next day the real cause of the disturbance.

On 24th December we joined the 2/5 Dressing Station who had moved further up. On Christmas Day we all received a small tin of fruit salad for Christmas dinner. On 25th December 12 more of our Stretcher Bearers and our CO Col. Palmer (who now became the Senior Medical Officer in the area) arrived at Dobodura. On 28th December, 24 more Stretcher Bearers arrived with Lt. McGill.

There were problems with evacuation of wounded. Snipers were very active in the area and it was dangerous to move around in the day outside our area. Snipers made

“nests” in trees or coconut palms overlooking tracks and fired on any movement. It was equally dangerous to move at night because of the possibility of meeting Jap patrols or even our own patrols where there was always the chance of the patrols firing first without asking for the password. One or two Stretcher Bearer squads were posted to each of the Battalion RAPs.

From 2/9 BN RAP, wounded were carried by our Bearers back to a relay post then back by jeep to the Dressing Station. From 2/10 BN RAP, wounded were carried by our Bearers through a series of staging posts then back by jeep to the Dressing Station. Jap patrols were very active at night and RAPs were moved back to get protection from troops protecting a bridge at the end of an old air-strip. Evacuation from the Dressing Station was a) lying wounded by native carriers on stretchers improvised by the natives from blankets, and b) sitting-cases, minor wounds, by jeep to 2 U.S. Field Hospital at Dobodura for evacuation to Moresby. Native bearers were controlled by the Assistant Surgeon 163 U.S. Regiment. 2/5 Field Ambulance controlled evacuations back to the Dressing Station.

At the Dressing Station the Surgical Teams attempted to operate day and night - this proved impractical and was abandoned. The chief difficulties were the number of Medical Officers and staff available, and with patients arriving day and night the MOs and orderlies had to work day and night whether they were in the theatre or not. The arrival of most of the patients at night and the need for strict black-outs (the Dressing Station was only 30 yards from beach) made the work of the MOs difficult. Other staff had the same difficulty. For many days and nights I scarcely had any sleep. On 27th December a search was made for a site for a new Dressing Station near the Buna/Semimi track. The object was to shorten the evacuation line from the 2/10 BN, a more direct route for carriers and a better and shorter track for jeeps. Selection was difficult - most of the area was either Kunai grass clearing or Sago swamp. The only dry spots were occupied by the Americans. A site was selected in a patch of jungle about 6 inches higher than the surrounding Sago swamp. On 29th December, 10 Field Ambulance detachments were moved to this new site.

This site chosen for the Dressing Station was the first more-or-less permanent site for our small unit - which now consisted of:

- a) the original group of 17th December, 2 officers and 28 O/R's;
- b) the CO with 12 Bearers; and
- c) Lt. McGill with 24 Bearers.

The Bearers were generally stationed away from the unit and only returned with casualties or for a brief rest.

At this site we set up tents for stores, wards, and operating theatre which was the largest tent and hub of the activity. Operating continued day and night and owing to the shortage of personnel we all took turns in the operating tent. We were here for 12 days from 27th December to 7th January, and then moved on again.

These days were very busy and trying days and nights, and all the few personnel were almost continuously engaged day and night on their own duties and assisting others. For example as the clerk it was my responsibility to:-

- a) keep the A&D Book recording all admissions and discharges. Write up the patients' medical cards. Advise Head Quarters details of deaths. This meant almost a 24 hour task;
- b) keep unit records;
- c) assist in the operating tent, sterilising, holding instruments for surgeon;
- d) assist in the wards, with meals, cups of tea, feeding, talking to distressed patients;
- e) assist with burying the dead including digging a grave. Sgt. Cowan usually read the Burial Service. (Graves were dug on the track leading to Dobodura just outside our camp); and
- f) sentry duty at night.

The camp was located about 100 yards off the track to Buna in the Kunai grass (grows to about 6 to 10 feet) and the area was generally always wet or at least moist. Our sleep was taken whenever things slackened off.

On 30th December 2/12 BN arrived from Goodenough Island and arrangements were made for an attack on the Japs on 1st January.

The 10th Field Ambulance was to be responsible for evacuations from an ADS set up near the 2/12 BN to the Dressing Station. Seven squads of Bearers were available and were organised in Bearer relay posts. Casualties on the first day were 151 and the Bearers worked all day and most of the night. The carry was a long one and the ground was very swampy. Battle casualties were evacuated to Dobodura and sick were held at the Dressing Station with a view to return to their unit after a couple of days rest and treatment. The surgical team was only able to deal with a fraction of the battle casualties - the remainder were evacuated to Dobodura for transfer to Port Moresby.

Evacuation of casualties from the Semimi area was proving a problem - this had been left to the 18 U.S. Port Hospital but owing to lack of experience, the service they provided was not satisfactory. On 1st, 2nd and 3rd January we sent a nursing orderly and another orderly (all that could be spared) to the Semimi Plantation by jeep with a hot box, medical companion and surgical haversack and they were stationed on the roadside to stop all the native carriers and jeeps with wounded and give hot drinks, adjust dressings and give morphia where necessary. These men were withdrawn at dusk each night as evacuations by jeep or native carrier were impracticable at night.

On 2nd January the Dressing Station had 62 admissions, 37 battle casualties, and 25 sick and 25 patients were evacuated to Dobodura. At the end of the day 77 patients were held, 50 sick and 27 battle wounded, many unfit for movement following operations. These had to be cared for all night by our handful of personnel - a mammoth task.

On the night of 2nd - 3rd January heavy rain fell and the area became a swamp with all the tents under water. Tents and flies had to be used separately to try to make the sick or wounded comfortable and our own 2-man tents could not be used as they all leaked. The area was a quagmire and latrines flooded. However, the situation improved in a day or two and the site proved its worth by providing rapid evacuation to Dobodura.

On 4th January the 18 Brigade - to which we were attached - was to move to Soputa. A detachment of 10 Field Ambulance was to move in three days to Soputa, which was inland from Buna on the road towards Popondetta. The Japanese were now cleared from Buna.

10 Field Ambulance detachment now came under the control of ADMS 7 Australian Division, Col. Norris. 7 Aust. Div. had the responsibility of clearing Japanese from the Gona/Sanananda areas and were to use 18 Brigade, including 10 Field Ambulance. The 10 Field Ambulance went by foot in two parties to Soputa. The members of the unit only had their personal gear, and stores and equipment were not available for some weeks as the road was not good enough for jeeps to use.

On 29th December a detachment of 2 Officers and 47 O/R's of our unit left Port Moresby by SS "BOTH" and arrived Oro Bay (on the coast east of Buna) with considerable stores. Instructions were sent to Major Francis in charge of the party to move to Buna with panniers, extra tents and cooking gear. Major Francis marched along the coast to Hariko and the gear was sent by barge which sank with the loss of all stores. Major Francis and his detachment moved to Semimi and spent the night with 18 U.S. Port Hospital, and then followed our other detachment to Soputa.

On 4th January the remainder of the Ambulance embarked on SS "Van HEUTZ" at Port Moresby for Oro Bay arriving 6th January. There they joined the 1st U.S. Port Hospital at Eoro Mission. The U.S. Medical Unit was the only one in the area, servicing U.S. and Australian troops. 10 Field Ambulance supplied staff to assist the 1st U.S. Port Hospital. On 8th January the "Van HEUTZ" was dive bombed and machine-gunned in Oro Bay - two members of the 10 Field Ambulance were acting as picquets on board and were slightly wounded. A few of our personnel were with some stores on the SS "JACOB" from Moresby to Oro Bay and the ship was bombed by Japanese aircraft, and sunk rapidly. All but one of our members escaped and were rescued. Bruce Pascoe was apparently trapped by some heavy equipment and lost his life.

On 10th January transport personnel of the unit arrived at Oro Bay on SS "BOTH" from Milne Bay, without any transport vehicles which had been handed over to 11 Aust. Div. at Milne Bay on instructions from ADMS 11 Aust. Div.

On 4th January strong pockets of Japanese were still in the area of the Soputa/Sanananda road - being held there by 18 BDE, 7 DIV CAV REGT, and 163 U.S. INF REGT. 10 Field Ambulance had a small ADS on the above road, two light section posts in the Jumbora area, and a strip hospital at Popondetta air strip to hold patients pending evacuation by air to Port Moresby. ADS (strip hospital) at Popondetta was staffed by 3 Officers and 90 O/R's. Major Yeats and his surgical team were also at Popondetta.

Air landings at the Popondetta strip were often suspended for days and at one time for nearly two weeks. Previously this post was manned by the 14 Field Ambulance who had insufficient staff to hold and care for patients. When we took over on 10th January there had been no evacuations for two days and 200 patients were held. No planes landed until 14th January when 450 patients were held and 436 were evacuated on 14th January. With our increased personnel we were able to improve the facilities, tents were re-erected, natives built huts for a surgical ward. On 22nd and 23rd January an American Unit arrived to establish a holding hospital and arrange evacuation of U.S. troops. This had been previously handled by our unit.

On 3rd February we held 397 patients many of whom had been held for up to 12 days having treatment, and 111 were returned to their units and the remainder evacuated by air to Moresby.

On 8th February Popondetta was closed and 10 Field Ambulance moved back to Soputa.

Popondetta is best remembered for 3 things.

a) The number of rats around - they were hungry and would if they could bite the flesh of sleeping soldiers. I remember always making sure my mosquito net was well

tucked in under the groundsheet; even so a rat got in one night and gnawed the end of my fountain pen (no ball point pens in those days). It was a fight to get it out.

b) Malaria - on 17th January 1943 I had quite a severe attack which meant staying in bed for quite a few days.

c) A shortage of food - at one time for over a week we were rationed to one tin of bully beef between two men per day, plus some biscuits. We stood in line to receive our daily ration, and it was best to stand with someone rather small as a big man would want the larger part. It was my misfortune to be next to Jack Walsh, a big, over 6 ft cook one day and of course he divided his almost 2/3 and 1/3, giving me the 1/3 - but of course his body needed more than mine. So all I had to eat that day was 1/3 tin of beef and I think two biscuits. Food was short because planes could not get across from Moresby and when they did the food was often dropped from the air and it landed in the scrub and not on the airstrip and it was impossible to recover it. The CO went all over the place to scrounge or beg food for us and our patients.

I didn't have much to do with the Popondetta evacuations because of Malaria.

Evacuation from Popondetta was a problem because of the difficulty of landing planes, and we had no proper facilities for holding patients. Because of the uncertainty of planes, where and when they would land, we had to have patients ready from morning until after 4 p.m., and at both ends of the main strip and also at another strip 5 miles away. This created problems with caring for and feeding often very sick patients, while they waited on the strip for planes. While the main body of the 10 Field Ambulance detachment was on the airstrip at Popondetta we had small parties attached to other units during the mopping up operations in the Sanananda area.

20 Stretcher Bearers were with the 2/5 Field Ambulance following the 18 BDE as it advanced along Killerton track. A light section (20 Bearers and one Sergeant) was at Merchants Post to deal with casualties on the Sanananda road. Small detachments relieved 14 Field Ambulance at Muttons Post and Jumbora. On 15th, 16th and 17th January our troops advanced along the Sanananda road to the beach and our unit set up an ADS in this area. Evacuation was by a roundabout route around the Japanese perimeter through swamp, with numerous streams to ford and then along broken

corduroy mostly under water and took about 3 hours. Capt. Brand set up Battalion Aid Posts along this route to assist with the evacuation and Battalion Medical Officers gave medical assistance where necessary. The units engaged in this action were 2/9 and 2/10 Battalions. Some stretcher cases from 2/10 Battalion involved 4 hours carrying, going around 2 Japanese perimeters. Our Bearers were constantly relieved, and the work of Sgt. J. Urquhart was specially praised by the CO.

On 23rd January a system of evacuation by native bearer trains returning from taking up rations was organised, and our Bearers were now mainly occupied supervising and directing the native carriers.

By 26th January most of our unit were withdrawn from the front line and the posts were taken over by Americans. There were still many armed and unarmed Japanese in the area escaping from Sanananda moving towards the Kumisi river area.

10 Field Ambulance continued to operate the MDS at Soputa vacated by 14 Field Ambulance who returned to Dobodura for movement to Port Moresby.

10 Field Ambulance now came under the control of 41 U.S. Division with the withdrawal of 7 DIV HQ.

From 7th February evacuations from Popondetta were discontinued and were concentrated at Dobodura, patients were held at Dobodura by the 2 U.S. Field Hospital pending movement to Port Moresby.

A new track had been built between Soputa and Dobodura and travelling time reduced from 2 hours to 1/2 to 3/4 hour in good weather.

On 4th February a party of 10 Field Ambulance was sent from Sanananda to Oro Bay by schooner to look after our stores which had been left there when the last unit detachment was sent to Soputa. At this time the road to Oro Bay via Dobodura was closed by rain and repairs.

On 20th and 21st February parties of fit personnel left for Oro Bay on foot to Embogu crossing then launch to Embogu village, then jeep to Oro Bay.

On 23rd February our rear party closed the MDS Soputa and left the care of remaining Australian troops in the area to 41 U.S. DIV.

As a result of this campaign (Buna/Sanananda) the CO wrote that a more satisfactory service could have been given if the full Field Ambulance had been sent to the area at first, as we were servicing a full Brigade and the normal allotment is a full Field Ambulance to each Brigade. We had to make do with very small detachments and the strain was nearly impossible.

Some Lessons and Problems during the Buna Campaign

The CO made comments about the following:

1. Surgical Teams with a Field Ambulance

More surgeons were required - three teams were needed for a Brigade each with four Medical Officers, one Surgeon, one for anaesthetics, one for resuscitation, and one for preparation and to sort out cases for surgery. The surgical teams were only provided with one Surgeon, and other Medical Officers were taken from the Field Ambulance so there were always shortages. The Field Ambulance also provided theatre assistants and a nursing orderly for sterilising.

2. Accommodation

Tents and flies had to be used separately but were not waterproof. Two-man tents always leak but had to be used and personnel were better off than infantry who only had their mosquito nets. Native huts were better than tents but the problem was getting the natives to build. At Popondetta five huts were put up and were very good.

3. Water

At Buna water from shallow holes 2 to 3 feet deep was used, and chlorinated using the American lister bag. Contamination by surface water occurred after heavy rain but could be prevented by building up the ground around the water holes.

4. Latrines

Water was from 2 feet to a couple of inches below ground surface. At Buna, trench latrines were used sited as far as possible from water holes, but these became useless after heavy rain because of flooding. Deep pit latrines were used at Soputa and Popondetta.

5. Paths

It was difficult to find one's way along the paths, even getting to and from the latrine was difficult and at times dangerous. The Americans gave us the tip to tape the paths with white bandages. Some personnel at the ADS in the Buna area actually became lost going to or returning from the latrines.

6. Equipment

Medical equipment for the Buna detachment was satisfactory and weekly maintenance lots were provided. Cooking gear was inadequate, also tentage. When a Field Ambulance moves by air, plane space is not sufficient to carry needed supplies and equipment.

7. Evacuations

At Buna and Sanananda Stretcher Bearers were a necessity, native carriers could not be used in forward areas. Lying cases and fractures cannot be moved by jeep over corduroy owing to the jolting, so native carriers had to be used all the way from Buna to Dobodura for these cases. Jeeps used for evacuations over roads with no corduroy were driven by 7 DIV ASC drivers who took wounded on their return journey to Dobodura after bringing supplies to forward areas. They were magnificent in the way they avoided shaking patients about in spite of their very long hours, and drove so slowly and carefully that repeatedly, walking parties passed jeeps going in the same direction.

8. Transport

All tracks in the Buna area were through swamp and often impassable even to jeeps. We had only one jeep at Buna and it was used continually on liaison, intercommunication with detachments and transport of stores. There was no time for maintenance. Night travel with jeep was almost impossible because of blackout conditions.

9. American Medical Service

We treated Americans at Popondetta and Sanananda and the Americans treated some Australian patients at Buna and all the casualties for evacuation passed through 2 U.S. Field Hospital at Dobodura. They always assisted cheerfully and gave freely of supplies and were good allies.

10. Protection of Medical Personnel

Because Japanese snipers were very active in all areas our personnel carried weapons as they wished.

11. Morale

The unit had attained a very high standard of training on embarkation in Brisbane, especially those in specialist jobs - nursing orderlies, clerks, water and hygiene duties. Morale had been affected by the long voyage of four weeks. It improved immediately the unit was given a job, and also when the unit went into action. Transport drivers were used as Stretcher Bearers and for general duties as there were no vehicles, and they did them willingly and well. The work and morale of the conscientious objectors, practically without exception, was most satisfactory.

Oro Bay/Dobodura

After our move to Oro Bay at the end of February the unit set up a Camp Hospital mainly for the treatment of sick who did not require evacuation to Moresby. One of the main purposes was for the treatment of those infected with **scrub typhus**.

Scrub typhus is the result of a bite from a rat infected with a very violent type of typhus and unless it was treated early it often resulted in death. The area around Buna, Sanananda, Gona and Soputa was very wet and low lying, and consisted of some coconut plantations but was mainly Kunai grass - growing to 6 feet and almost impossible to penetrate. This whole area was excellent cover for rats and as a result there were many cases of soldiers infected with the typhus virus. The usual treatment was to send them as quickly as possible to Moresby for admission to the AGH. But even the trip to Moresby by plane could take all day, or even more, and patients were arriving in Moresby beyond any treatment. The 10 Field Ambulance therefore set up a Camp Hospital with a special ward for the treatment of these patients. Treatment was mainly complete rest, quiet, and constant attention by Medical Officers and orderlies.

The ward was run much as an “intensive care” ward in our modern hospitals without any of the equipment. Of the hundred or so patients treated in the few months we cared for these patients, not one died and all were fully recovered and able to return to their units except for two patients who were members of the 6 Field Ambulance. These two patients were treated for a while by their own medical staff and by the time they reached us it was too late to help them. Dr. Emmet Spring was the principal Medical Officer who worked out a satisfactory method of treatment. He wrote details of his treatment for the AMA (Australian Medical Association) - I think this was where he sent it. (I typed this and kept a copy which was attached to documents for the War Diary).

Major Ian Wilson, one of our Senior Medical Officers contracted scrub typhus. In 1992 on Anzac Day he told us of his experience. He was very sick, fever, hallucinations, sweats and didn't care about anything. Imagined he was dying, had the priest there to give him final unction (although he is not a Catholic) and then next day recovered a little and was determined to beat death. He said he knew what it was to walk through the “valley of the shadow of death” as David did. And he paid tribute to the wonderful nursing provided by 10 Field Ambulance Staff, headed by Laurie Malkin (an accountant by profession and only picked up his nursing experience in the Army). At Moresby where most of the scrub typhus was treated, one in four did not

recover. Our record was magnificent. As the troops moved more towards Lae they were out of the area of infection.

Oro Bay

Most of the Ambulance were together here but many were engaged in helping elsewhere e.g. on the wharf unloading vessels from Moresby. Supplies were unloaded at Oro Bay and sent forward to the Lae area by barges. It was too dangerous for the larger ships to go further as the Japanese were very active in air raids, both day and night. They often bombed the harbour area and some ships were lost. There were some interesting dog fights in the air over Oro Bay between Zeros (Japan) and Lightnings (America). The Japs also had bombers which bombed as far away as Moresby - they came from Rabaul.

Here I was employed in the office keeping records of Admissions/Discharges etc. and general office duties. For a period I slept in the office area with a phone under my pillow to receive messages of air raids, and then had to sound the alarm so that staff could take precautions e.g. no lights in wards etc. Then when the "all clear" came, this had to be sounded on the alarm. Some nights there was very little sleep; with almost constant alarms all night. The night raids did little damage and the alarm was sounded mainly because of planes passing over to Moresby. The most dangerous raids were in the daytime and did a lot of damage. Later I fell ill and had a small itchy rash-like sore, above the right eye - was admitted to hospital and put on sulphur drugs. This didn't clear it up and the Medical Officers were puzzled, and it was quite painful. One day Major Francis was passing the ward, saw me and came over and said "I know what you have, I have only known one case of it and the man died. You have shingles (Herpes Zoster) of the right ophthalmic nerve". So I was taken off sulphur sent back to my tent and told to rest completely for four weeks - no reading at all. By the end of the four weeks I was well again, and able to take on my next assignment which was to handle the clerical work at the Air Evacuation Post at Dobodura.

Air Evacuation from Dobodura

Casualties were being brought back to Dobodura from the fighting along the coast towards Lae by barge, and then from the coast by road to Dobodura. One Company of the 10 Field Ambulance, about 100 personnel, set up a staging camp at Dobodura to receive casualties, and give them minor care where necessary, to assess them for either air evacuation to Moresby or admission to the Camp Hospital at Oro Bay. Those for air evacuation had to be held until planes could be arranged. Often we held 3 or 4 hundred casualties, sick and battle wounded.

The staging camp worked like this -

- a) Ambulances or jeeps or trucks brought the patients to a central Admission Tent (which was also part of the office). Here their details were taken and records marked - all patients carried a Medical Record Card which accompanied them wherever they went - just like the medical records on the ends of the beds in the present day hospitals.
- b) Each patient was examined by a Medical Officer who decided on the next move, and at the same time made sure the patient was comfortable. One patient came in with a broken arm as a result of a gunshot wound - and he was in a lot of pain, so it was decided to set the arm and put it in plaster. At this point the 2 clerical staff (myself and one assistant) acted as medical orderlies and had to assist the Medical Officer with dressings etc. I had to give the anaesthetic for the operation - intravenous pentothal. The operation was quite successful.
- c) There was temporary accommodation for the patients and of course they all had to be fed - quite a large task.
- d) Evacuation to Moresby was by the U.S. Air Force from their nearby air-strip. Contact was made with them in the evening - about 6 p.m. - to find out how many planes they would have available. When they told us this figure, we then had to sort out the patients to fill the planes. Preference was given to stretcher cases; planes could only take about 12 stretcher cases or 20 walking. When the planes were filled we then had to phone back to the Air Force to give them plane details - by 8 p.m.
- e) Then we had to prepare a nominal roll for each plane - typed. One copy for the U.S. Air Force, one for ourselves and one for the senior man in each plane for the authorities at Port Moresby.

- f) Patients were transported next morning by 8 a.m. to the air strip by ambulance, jeep or truck and one of our staff arranged to fill the planes as per our lists.
- g) There was no guarantee that the planes would leave that day or that they would leave at any specified time. Often patients were returned in the afternoon to start all over again next day.
- h) The preparation of the typed rolls was quite a task especially if we had 20 planes to fill and 2 or 3 hundred patients - often took us to 11 p.m. - there was only one typewriter.

Two incidents show the hazards we faced while at Dobodura.

1. An ambulance brought in a Major from a Field Regiment, on a stretcher - he was on the top berth and when we went into the ambulance he was thrashing around and we found he was strapped down. He was a huge man, all of 20 stone. There were only two of us available to lift his stretcher down so he could be examined - and I felt the strain of that lift for days. The Major was what we called "troppo" and required a lot of attention until we were able to get the U.S. Air Force to take him back to Moresby. Jim Lyall, one of our big orderlies, went with him back to Moresby to take care of him in the plane.
2. One night quite late we were just finishing up and in bed or getting ready for bed about 10 p.m. when all of a sudden a naked and armed man entered the tent where we worked and slept. I was in bed and he ordered me out and told us to do what he said or he would shoot us. There were three or four of us in the tent, I was prodded out of bed with the end of the rifle and we were told to go outside and stand to attention. One of us was able to slip under the side of the tent and go for help which soon arrived and the man was tackled from behind and brought down. He was an ANGAU (Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit) Officer also gone "troppo" - and he thought we were his natives. We had great difficulty getting him to Port Moresby and in the meantime he had to be watched with a 24-hour armed guard. Jim Lyall eventually took him to Port Moresby on a plane on his own with a pistol at his head. This was the only way the Americans would accept him.

There were also occasional raids by Japanese planes on our area. Later our troops took Lae and Dobodura closed down. Our unit moved to Lae area for a short while and then on to Finschafen.

Our orderlies were engaged on the barges bringing wounded and sick from the Lae area to Dobodura. The move to Lae was by barge and when we landed we marched to our camp site outside the remains of the town of Lae. We rested there for a while in preparation for further action in the areas of Dreger Harbour and Finschafen.

While at Lae we often bathed, swam in the river. On one occasion while a few of us were swimming a plane came over fairly low and commenced to fire its machine guns - some of these bullets came dangerously close, just an inch away. We went under, how we got up again I don't know. We learnt our lesson there.

Soon we moved to an area right in the centre of the old town of Lae. Here I had Dengue Fever, quite severe, and others also had it badly. After resting we were off again further up the coast to Finschafen.

We were camped at Siki Cove and engaged in general evacuation duties for the 9 Australian Division who were clearing the Japanese from the coastal areas and also inland towards Sattleburg.

We could swim in the sea here and I remember one day swimming during a storm and a huge wave caught me and carried me away up into the branches of a tree. Fortunately I was able to hold a branch and then climb down - otherwise I would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks.

From Finschafen we returned to Australia on the "KLIPFONTEIN", an elaborate new Dutch vessel only a few years old. We had the best of everything and had a good time on board.

We had had 21 months on active service in New Guinea.

We learnt that we were to be relieved earlier but the unit which was to take our place was on the hospital ship "CENTAUR" which was lost off the Queensland Coast after being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.

On return to Australia on 29th May 1944 we were sent on home leave, on 4th June 1944 to 25th July 1944 - 46 days.

Part 3

1944 - 1946 In the Solomon Islands at Bougainville

After returning from New Guinea and completing home leave on 25th July 1944, we returned to the 10th Field Ambulance on the Atherton Tableland in Queensland.

We left Melbourne by train at 1.30 p.m. on 25th July for Sydney. Sleepers were provided at Albury and on 26th July we arrived in Sydney, changed trains and left for Brisbane in sleeper carriages. Had a fast trip and arrived Brisbane at 10.10 a.m. on 27th July.

We were all sent to Transit Depot in Brisbane where we were told we would remain overnight. Local leave was granted from 2 p.m. and several of us went in to Brisbane where we had dinner at the “Canberra”.

On 28th we were also granted leave from 11.00 a.m., and after lunch visited the art gallery and museum. Had tea in the city and returned to the Depot for the evening.

On 29th we were warned to be ready to proceed north at 6.30 p.m. and in the meantime were granted leave from 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Had dinner in the city at the “Canberra” and returned to the Depot. Boarded the train at 6.30 p.m. but it did not leave until 8.00 p.m. Settled down to sleep on the floor.

July 30th - we arrived at Bundaberg 6.00 a.m., had breakfast there on the station and left soon after. Rockhampton for midday meal, a good meal and train runs down the main street for some distance. Tea was at St Lawrence at 8.00 p.m. and shortly after settled down again on the floor for the night.

On 31st arrived at Bowen for breakfast at 7.30 a.m. Now we were in the sugar cane area and passed through Ayr, Home Hill, and other towns. Tomatoes, potatoes and pumpkins were also growing in the area. Arrived at Stuart 17 miles from Townsville

for dinner, an army dinner. Afterwards we went on to Townsville and were allowed to leave the train until 4.00 p.m.

Walked around the old dirty holiday town and were glad to return to the station. Left at 4.00 p.m. Had tea at Cardwell at 8.15 p.m. Meals in Queensland, except for that at Stuart, were prepared by local civilian organisations and were very good.

August 1st - arrived at Cairns at 5.00 a.m. and we were to detrain 7 miles further on at Redlynch. Arrived there at 6.15 a.m., detrained and marched 1 mile to the Staging Camp. Had breakfast and were told we would not be moving out until early the following morning. We were now in sugar cane country with red soil and surrounded by high mountains.

August 2nd - rose at 6.00 a.m., breakfast at 6.30 a.m. and are ready to leave at 7.30 a.m. Marched to Redlynch Station and left at 8.30 a.m. As the climb over the mountains towards Atherton began the train was split in two. We were in the 2nd half and left 15 minutes after the first. Passed through many tunnels on the climb which was gradual and followed the side of the mountain with good views of Cairns and the surrounding coastal plain, and sea. Soon we followed the Barron River 1,000 feet below in a huge gorge with sheer sides. The train joined again at the top and began its slow weary journey through dry country to Mareeba where we lunched. A few more miles brought us to better country near Atherton, green, dairying land, and maize growing. Atherton is 2,400 feet above sea level, and it was cold. Arrived Wongabel 5.00 p.m., having travelled 68 miles from Redlynch, nearly 9 hours travelling time.

August 3rd - were to be ready to move at 11.30 to our unit site only 15 minutes away. A well-established camp with tents erected among she-oaks. Settled in to my tent and spent the day settling. Very cold with a slight breeze.

August 4th - a wet cold day with frequent showers - the day free for washing and settling in.

August 5th - carting wood in morning, sport in afternoon. Again wet and cold, a miserable day.

August 6th - a day off and I went to Atherton in afternoon, saw a Mr. Moloney and stayed with him until after 5.00 p.m., returned to camp, walked last 2 miles. Still wet.

August 7th - worked in office all day - office space is very restricted and unable to do much. Our meals are poor and inadequate. Weather clearing but still cold.

August 8th - worked in office which is being enlarged and remodelled.

August 9th - worked in office. Meals are improving.

August 10th/11th - in office again, renovations are finished.

August 12th - in office in morning, sports afternoon. Weather is now hot day with cold night.

August 13th - worked all day in the office.

August 14th - had the day off and went for a walk to the hill behind our camp where we were able to relax in the sun. In the afternoon made my bed narrower as instructed. Beds were constructed using poles, saplings and groundsheets stretched between 2 saplings.

August 15th/19th - as I belonged to "B" Company I had to spend the days with them. Mornings drill and lectures, and afternoons a route march. Fine weather.

August 20th - a day off to rest.

August 21st/26th - spent the days working in the office all day. Some days very busy with typing and filling in of reports. There were usually two of us in the office, the Sergeant and a Corporal.

August 27th - in the office on my own today, not a very busy day.

August 28th - a day off for rest and washing, writing letters etc.

August 29th/31st - with "B" Company for training, lectures in the mornings and route marches or sports in the afternoons. During these weeks the whole unit was attending the dentist so that all teeth were in good order. I had three visits and about five fillings.

September 1st/2nd - lectures in the morning and long route marches in the afternoon mainly up hills in fairly rugged country. We were all very tired by the end of the day.

September 3rd - another day off, writing etc.

September 4th - back to work in the office. In afternoon to the dentist and had an impression for a plate for some front upper teeth which were missing.

September 5th/6th - in office, in charge, as Sergeant is out in the field on a 2-day stint. Had to sleep in office to answer phones etc.

September 7th/9th - in office, staff returned from stint and we had a full office staff with a few to spare. Received my false teeth.

September 10th - worked in office to allow other staff to have a day off.

September 11th - a day off. Weather is mostly fine but have had a few wet wintry types of days.

September 12th - out in the fields with "A" Company who were acting as "patients" in a training exercise by 2/12 Field Ambulance. Spent the whole day out but did very little.

September 13th - out in the field again but with “B” Company on a similar exercise but in a different area.

September 14th - in office again and in charge as the Sergeant left for a school in Brisbane. This meant sleeping in the office.

September 15th/16th - in office and really on duty 24 hours of the day as messages often received late at night and our officers often required information to assist in arranging training exercises with other units.

September 17th - day off for reading, writing, washing.

September 18th/24th - work in office - the CO is in hospital.

September 25th - day off!

September 26th - in office in morning but in afternoon had to get ready to go on an exercise with “B” Company as clerk next day. Left about 3.00 p.m. and spent the night on the ground under a tent. It was wet and muggy.

September 27th - left our overnight camp at 6.30 a.m. and marched to the site selected for our Ambulance Staging Post - set up ready for “casualties” but had a slack day. We were fed on field operation rations, all tinned food.

September 28th/29th - continuing our exercise, moved a couple of times and had to reset our tents etc. Slept under tent flys on ground. Exercise finished at 3.30 p.m., and we had tea and packed up and returned to camp at 5.00 p.m.

September 30th - spent the day in the office and were fairly busy. There is a rumour going around that CMF personnel are to be drafted from the unit. At present the unit consists of AIF personnel plus some conscripted personnel who have never joined the AIF. If the unit is to serve outside Australia or its territories it cannot take the CMF

personnel with it. Australian territories include Papua, New Guinea and Bougainville in the Solomons group. I am a CMF member.

October 1st - had the day off and hitch-hiked to Malanda - had some difficulty getting rides there but arrived 11.30 a.m. Stayed with the family for meeting and lunch and then walked to Lake Eachen to pick up a ride to return to our camp - some members of our unit were at Lake Eachen swimming so we rode home with them, arriving about 4.30 p.m. It was a hot day but nights are always cool.

October 2nd/3rd - worked in office all day.

October 4th/5th - were told that all CMF personnel were to be drafted from the unit and would be used as reinforcements for field medical units outside Australian Corps. Was again requested by the CO to reconsider the question of joining the AIF, but did not wish to change my decision. Working in office all day.

October 9th - day off.

October 10th/16th - working in office, there is a shortage of staff because of route marches and field exercises.

October 17th - a holiday, had the day off, cooler at night.

October 18th/19th - working in office again.

October 20th - all day route march to the crater along the Ravenshoe Road. A large hole 200 feet deep with steep rocky sides. Had lunch there and then walked on further in the afternoon until picked up by trucks about 3.30 p.m. and returned to camp. A journey of 18 miles - feet were sore but soon recovered.

October 21st/22nd - in the office all day.

October 23rd - day off, washing, writing etc.

October 24th - in office all day.

October 25th/27th - preparing for an exercise and left camp at 4.00 p.m. and bivouacked for the night. Next day moved to the site of our exercise, set up the office and did practically nothing all day. Walks in the evening and saw plenty of brolgas - the ground is swampy. The exercise continued next day and ceased after tea when we returned to our camp. Had a good wash and felt better, early to bed. Weather is hot with some cloud and light rain.

October 28th - in office all day.

October 29th - day off and went to Malanda - on the back of a motor bike ridden by John Weare.

October 30th - in office, had the whole day on my own so was fairly busy.

October 31st/November 5th - in office. A few wet rainy days.

November 6th - day off, washing etc.

November 7th/11th - work in office, fairly slack. The weather is now hot and oppressive under the tin roof of the Orderly Room, as the office is called.

November 12th - day off and went to Malanda with Cliff Watkins and Bill Jones. No relief from the heat.

November 13th - worked in office again.

November 14th - went for a march with HQ and had a good day, hot to start but a thunderstorm in afternoon cleared the air.

November 15th - in office, another thunderstorm and it is now much cooler.

November 16th/20th - worked in office.

November 21st - day off for washing etc.

November 22nd - was told today I would be transferred to 16 Personnel Staging Camp on November 25th along with all the other CMF NCO's, for disposal by Queensland Echelon and Records. Remainder of CMF personnel were to go to 15 Field Ambulance.

November 23rd/24th - worked in office and began preparing to leave the unit.

November 25th - said goodbye to all our good friends and left at 1.00 p.m. We were four NCO's, self, Les, Jack Urquhart and Doug Clemens. We went by road to Redlynch, arrived 4.30 p.m.

Now began a period of about 5 weeks spent in staging camps in Australia, absolutely wasting every day, 5 weeks precious time wasted.

From 25th November to 1st December - was spent at Redlynch Staging Camp.

The first tent we were allotted was filthy, rotten eggs lying around and a half-stale loaf of bread. We all moved ourselves to another tent and made ourselves fairly comfortable. Water was short in this camp and use for showers and washing restricted. We spent some time washing dirty greasy dishes in the kitchen, wrote letters, and "bashed the spine" most of the day. (This means lay on our beds for long periods in the day). The weather was hot and muggy. We often had to use a little cunning and were able to dodge the Sergeants who came around looking for work parties to do all sorts of silly jobs. One day we did get caught and had to unload two trucks of wood at the kitchen. On the 30th we had the day off and went by sea to Turtle Bay, a journey of 3 hours, had a swim there and called at a native mission. On the return journey we had tea in Cairns, and called on Weare's who brought us back to

the camp. We were then warned to be ready to move on 2nd to 5 ARD (Advanced Recruit Depot).

December 2nd - left at 6.00 a.m. for Cairns Railway Station and left there by train at 8.30 a.m. After a slow journey we arrived at Cardwell for lunch at 3.00 p.m. Arrived at Townsville at 7.30 p.m. and went to 13 APSC (a staging camp).

December 3rd - were told to be ready to move to Sellheim, on the railway to Chartres Towers in inland Queensland. Left by train at 6.00 p.m. and arrived Sellheim at 3.45 a.m. Slept on the ground for the remainder of the night.

December 4th - reveille at 7.00 a.m. and after breakfast our unit was inspected and all surplus gear taken from us. After a medical inspection we were taken to No. 8 Company, allotted a tent (8 in the tent) and no beds so we slept on the ground. The camp is on the banks of the Burdekin River. Very hot, barren and windy. A dental inspection in the afternoon and as tea was at 4.45 p.m. the evening was long. There are some permanent huts in the camp, a Recreation Hut, Mess Hut, etc.

December 5th - tent inspection - a daily routine - and then a parade for allocation of duties. We four had no duties allotted so we did "nothing" all day. A very hot humid day.

December 6th - a route march in the morning and nothing to do in the afternoon. Another very hot day. Do not like the routine here, and no towns nearby for leave.

December 7th - detailed to clean up the camp, pick up papers, bottles, rubbish lying around and then a march to the river and listened to a First Aid lecture by NCO's. The morning dragged. In the afternoon a visit to the assault course and in the river swimming. A very hot day - 112 degrees in the shade.

December 8th - another day much the same as yesterday only it is hotter - 119 degrees. Windy later and cloud building up.

December 9th - march in morning, swimming in afternoon.

December 10th - Sunday and a day off after attending a few parades. Was made Orderly NCO for the evening.

December 11th - it is still hot. Spent the day unloading ammunition from trucks to railway vehicles. It was hard work and we worked long hours.

December 12th - another day on the ammunition - we had more men today but my hands are badly blistered, but managed to see the day out.

December 13th - a large draft called out for movement but I am not included. A rest day and to get away from the camp went across the railway line, found a sheltered spot in the scrub and had a good sleep. In the afternoon swimming in the river. A holiday.

December 14th/15th - nothing to do at all, two wasted, weary days.

December 16th - some lectures in the morning and bandaging demonstrations, afternoon swimming and my face is beginning to peel with the sun.

December 17th - a day off, spent writing and reading. Still very hot weather.

December 18th - detailed for duty in the Sergeants' mess, an easy job for 2 hours each meal time washing up cooking utensils. All tents in our area were pulled down today and we moved into an unused mess hut. A heavy thunderstorm lasting 2 hours and water everywhere.

December 19th - warned for draft to New Guinea. Continued my job in the Sergeants' mess but was withdrawn after breakfast. Did a few brief marches. Further heavy rain again in afternoon.

December 20th - a brief march in the morning and in the afternoon had needles for cholera. Warm and humid again with rain.

December 21st - spent the whole day loading ammunition and as it was a hot sticky day I sweated so profusely that my pants were absolutely saturated. I have never sweated so much in all my life. A very heavy storm in afternoon, a lot of rain and the river is rising. Later there was a beautiful sunset lasting for nearly an hour.

December 22nd - another day on the ammunition, very heavy work and again very hot with a storm in the afternoon.

December 23rd - the morning on ammunition and in the afternoon all personnel on draft had a kit inspection.

December 24th - receiving clothing etc. we needed to make up a full kit. Further heat but not so humid.

December 25th - Christmas Day, plenty of "cheer" about. Had a good dinner and tea, poultry, fruit, salads, ice-cream, etc. Swim after tea and plenty of fights amongst drunken personnel. A very hot day.

December 26th - we were told our draft would leave next day for Townsville. Nothing to do all day. Warm day.

December 27th - left camp at 3.30 a.m. and boarded train at 4.30 a.m. at Sellheim. After a quick trip arrived at Stuart outside Townsville at 8.00 a.m. Had breakfast there and then went by motor to Julago. Were bedded down there and told our stay was indefinite, but would not be long. There was a water shortage in the camp. Had our midday meal and were granted leave for the rest of the day, but stayed in camp and had as company three chaps who had just returned from Bougainville on leave, they were good company. A very dusty camp.

December 28th - we were to leave in the morning, according to rumour but later we were again granted leave, and were free to go to Townsville but stayed put.

December 29th - now we are told to prepare for a long stay as there were no ships available. Now our destination is Bougainville. We were granted leave but as there were no trains available for Townsville until 5.00 p.m. we went with the guard on a train to the meatworks and remained there while the train shunted and loaded. Spent about an hour there and looked through the works with the guard. Then returned by train to Townsville where we had a meal, bought some books to read and returned to camp at 11.00 p.m.

December 30th - were told we would be commencing duties on 1st January 1945. Leave granted from 10 a.m. and went to Townsville, returning at 3.30 p.m.

December 31st - a day off, reading, writing etc. Weather is again very hot.

1st January 1945 - a New Year begins, a poor New Year's Day. I didn't get a job and spent the time lounging around wasting time on a grand scale. Warm day.

January 2nd - have a job in the cookhouse - about 2 hours every meal time. The kitchen is alive with flies which were liable to pick you up and take you away with them. Flies elsewhere are also bad. Hot day but later some cloud.

January 3rd - again worked in the cookhouse, work only light and hours good. Rumour says we leave on 5th. To shift tomorrow from "B" Block to "D" Block.

January 4th - were told we would be moving at 8.30 a.m. on 5th so the rest of the day was spent preparing. Made a last visit to Townsville during which we consumed large quantities of milk and ice-cream.

January 5th - embarked on USA T "SHAWNEE" at 10.00 a.m. and were given duties as picquets. We were housed on "B" Deck in comfortable quarters with plenty of

fresh air. Meals were taken away down in the interior in the hottest place I have ever known. The ship sailed at 6.00 p.m.

January 6th/7th - at sea, calm weather. Doing 8 hours picquet duty each day from 12 to 4 in afternoon and also from 12 to 4 at night, so not getting much sleep. Picquet duty involved keeping troops out of "out of bounds" areas on the ship.

January 8th - land soon after midday and we anchored in Empress Augusta Bay at 4.00 p.m. A large bay with many ships of all sizes and signs of great activity on shore. We were to remain on board until the morning.

January 9th - from our ship we have a good view of the active volcano in the distance, with smoke etc. coming from it. We began to disembark at 8.00 a.m. and were on shore at 10.00 a.m. Were taken by truck to Torokina staging camp (NGDD), had lunch and were moved to the Staging Area to await allocation by 2nd Echelon. In the evening after settling in we (Les and I) went to the 15 Field Ambulance, about 5 miles away where some of the old 10th Field Ambulance personnel were camped. And so we begin a new experience, waiting, waiting to see what is going to become of us in the future. There was heavy rain in the evening.

January 10th - Les and I were appointed Orderly Corporals for the camp and our duties were practically nil, except we had to be present at each meal parade to march the troops to their mess huts. In the evening went to 109 CCS (Casualty Clearing Station) and looked up Dick Rhodes an old 10th mate. He is in hospital with a nervous complaint. Also went to 106 CCS and there met two friends Ray Hall and Ray Watkins.

January 11th - a day in camp again - quite a comfortable camp. In the evening again visited 15 Field Ambulance. Rain again in the afternoon and evening.

January 12th - all the reinforcements who arrived on our ship were posted to units on various parts of Bougainville except six, and I was one of the six. Les was posted to the 17 Field Ambulance and was to await transport to them on Green Island - a small

island off the coast of New Britain and north of Bougainville. In the evening we went to see Neil McKay who has a very comfortable RAP at Base Headquarters. Had a very good supper with him. It rained again in the afternoon. The six of us left in the Staging Area were appointed kitchen picquets and the main duty was to have the kitchen fires alight at 4.00 a.m. and then the whole of the rest of the day was free.

January 13th - went to 15 Field Ambulance, they are to move soon. No rain today. Les is still waiting for a boat to Green Island.

January 14th - went again to see Dick Rhodes who seems to be much improved. Pouring rain while we were there and had to wait for a break, then caught a truck for a ride back to camp. Roads were washed away and seriously damaged by water.

January 15th - spent the day washing, mending and reading. In the evening to 15th Field Ambulance to see some of the friends before they moved. Had to walk most of the way there and back.

January 16th/18th - spent the days in camp with very little to do - it is getting very monotonous. Les received notice that he would be leaving in the morning.

January 19th - Les left a.m. for Green Island. Doing nothing, a glorious waste of time, 8 weeks of it so far. There is very little to do of an evening as there are no facilities for writing or reading, no lights allowed after dark.

January 20th - stayed in camp - it rained all day. Have not had any mail since arriving on Bougainville.

January 21st - left early after breakfast to visit 15th Field Ambulance and had two good meals there, meals in the Staging Camp are pretty basic, and it was good to get a decent meal.

January 22nd - still lighting fires each morning at 4.00 a.m. Made some inquiries re the length of my stay here, told them I had been 8 weeks wandering around doing

nothing. Was told there was nothing I could do and that I would be posted as soon as there was a vacancy. Asked to be allowed to transfer to another branch such as Pay or Postal, but was told that would not be possible. Also asked could I have home leave until something turned up, but of course, this was refused. There is a large notice outside the Orderly Room reading "Patience is a virtue, Possess it if you can." So I must continue to be patient. Have still not received any mail since arriving in Bougainville.

January 23rd - went to see Neil McKay at Base Headquarters, and he took me down to the DDMS re a job and he said all units were full strength and there appears no prospects for future posting to a unit. Rain in the afternoon but it stopped at tea time. After tea went to the 15th Field Ambulance who are still waiting for their move to take place. Had a lift there but walked home, five miles.

January 24th - swimming in morning and wrote letters, a visit to 106 CCS in afternoon.

January 25th - still no mail received. Swimming in morning, and stayed at home all afternoon. I have enrolled for a Cost Accounting Course with the Sydney Technical College and have some of their preliminary course papers, so I have been looking through these and commenced reading and working problems.

January 26th - received about 12 letters so stayed home reading and writing letters.

January 27th - went to 15th Field Ambulance and spent the day there, swimming with them in the afternoon. Returned in evening to find the other five in my tent had gone.

January 29th - good news, was told I had been posted to the 17th Field Ambulance on Green Island, the same unit where Les was. Had to await transport, and in the meantime was given a job in the Orderly Room until I left. It was good to leave the fire-lighting job.

January 30th - in Orderly Room, writing out Leave Passes. Went to 15th Field Ambulance in evening to say farewell.

January 31st - working in Orderly Room - no sign of moving. Mail now arriving well and quickly, 4 days from Australia.

February 1st/4th - working in Orderly Room - not much to do once the Leave Draft papers had been completed.

February 5th - work as usual. Again went to 15th Field Ambulance in afternoon.

February 6th - the departure of the Leave Draft has been postponed - the troops are all in the Staging Camp waiting for their departure. Very little to do in the Orderly Room, as hardly any movement in or out of troops.

February 7th/8th - doing a little work in Orderly Room. Was told to be ready to leave at a moments notice by plane. Weather is a mixture of rain and fine days.

February 9th - left for airstrip and plane was away at 9.25 a.m., arrived Green Island 10.15 a.m. On the strip was a jeep from 17th Field Ambulance with a Warrant Officer. So I hopped in and was promptly ordered out. I tried explaining but the WO was not convinced. However he took me along and handed me over to the CO Lt. Col. Irwin. They had apparently not been told of my arrival and said they did not want another clerk. However I said I would do anything, so they took me to a tent with four others, some seem OK.

Les is four tents further down. Spent the afternoon settling in - we have electric lights in tents and are right on the sea-shore, the noise of the waves kept me awake the first night. The island is only small and mainly flat and there are no Japs on the island. A true coral island with a lagoon in the centre.

February 10th - was to interview one of the Majors today re work but did not get that far. Did nothing all day. Each afternoon is usually free, the unit runs a small Camp

Hospital for troops on the island, some Americans, some natives and a few Australians. Patients are mainly sick, malaria and dysentery. Weather hot and very dry, they have had no rain for 17 days.

February 11th - Sunday and a day off. Writing, reading. Hot day.

February 12th - joined a squad doing general duties, tidying up camp, which is built on the edge of the sea with a mainly stony floor, some trees and a lot of rubbish, wood etc. lying around. Swimming in afternoon, the beach is fairly calm and good for swimming. A very hot day.

February 13th - did general duties again and afternoon free. Hot.

February 14th - general duties for a while then interviewed by the Major - he asked many questions about the type of work I had been doing both in the army and in civilian life. At the end he suggested that I go to the Pathology Laboratory to assist and get a little knowledge which may be useful later, as the clerical side was full. In the event of a vacancy I would be used as a clerk. Spent the rest of the day in the Path. Lab. with Sgt. Richards who had established a small laboratory to take simple tests to assist in diagnosis of some of the tropical complaints such as malaria - we could distinguish type of malaria and dysentery. The Sgt. had a comprehensive book of various tests and had spent some time in the Pathology Department of an Adelaide hospital. At this particular time there were not a lot of patients in the small Camp Hospital, some natives and U.S. troops, with only a small number of Australians.

February 15th - in the Lab. learning how to take tests and distinguish various diseases - we mainly used blood tests.

February 16th - in the Lab. learning, a busy day with quite a few new patients. Still very hot and without rain, so our water supply is running very short.

February 17th - again in the Lab., again quite a bit of work, all my work has to be checked by the Sgt. for the time being.

February 18th - a day off - writing, reading, no washing allowed. Rain in evening so our supply of water replenished.

February 19th - some rain again in the morning. In the Lab. again and it has been arranged that I work only in the mornings and have every afternoon off. This is the general rule, only work half the day. Had a good washing afternoon.

February 20th - in the Lab. - the Sgt. is ill but there was no work, so had a fairly easy day. More rain.

February 21st - the Sgt. still sick so I have to be on duty all day until 4.00 p.m. Some work to do.

February 22nd - a very busy day in the Lab., the Sgt. is well again. Am gradually learning things and getting practical experience of how to take samples and then testing. Much rain.

February 23rd - another busy day - we test all new patients for malaria now which is fairly common, most of our admissions have this disease.

February 24th - the morning spent cleaning up the Lab., then had the afternoon off. Sea is rough and we wonder will the waves come right up to our tents.

February 25th - day off. A fine day.

February 26th - at work, fairly slack but spent learning more.

February 27th/28th - another two fairly slack days - weather now fine.

March 1st - Les went to Brigade Head Quarters for two weeks relieving. A fairly busy morning in Lab.

March 2nd/3rd - slack days, wet, showery and cool.

March 4th - Sunday and a rest day.

March 5th - little to do in the morning but quite a few jobs in the afternoon so I had to forego my afternoon off. Cloudy with showers.

March 6th - work much as usual, some rain.

March 7th - plenty of work today, very interesting work.

March 8th - work again - my left foot is becoming sore and infected. Dull day with showers.

March 9th - went on sick parade and have infected tinea. Received treatment and on light duties. Foot very sore by afternoon.

March 10th - continued treatment on my foot and only did light duties - foot becoming worse.

March 11th - went on sick parade again, treatment changed and given no duties. Rested all day.

March 12th - given light duties again and pottered around but being on my foot so much did not improve it, and it was sore by night.

March 13th - no duties again, had a rest all day and the foot much better. Received a lot of mail. Dull, cloudy, wet weather.

March 14th/15th - no duties again for 2 days - rested foot which is improving well.

March 16th - no duties again. Shifted to a new tent today, which I requested, as one of the occupants of our tent, a cook, is not very good company - suffering from a nasty

disease. Settled down in new quarters, quite comfortable and all decent chaps. The young lad I was next to, a few days later was sent with a small detachment further north towards Buka Island and early in the morning left his tent to go to the latrine and he was shot dead by a Japanese sniper, who was waiting in the area for movement.

March 17th/18th - no duties again for two days - rested, but foot is now much better and I can walk on it without any pain. Walked around quite a bit on 18th. Weather is fine but cool.

March 19th - again at work in the Pathology hut, good to be doing something.

March 20th - work again but am treating the foot still. Les returned today from Brigade Head Quarters and is working in the Regimental Office (or Orderly Room).

March 21st - again moved my quarters - I did not request this move - am now in a tent full of "religious" chaps. Quite comfortable. Worked today, interviewed the CO re future but nothing satisfactory came from the interview.

March 22nd - all the occupants of the tent are in hospital.

March 23rd/24th - work as usual, weather is wet and cold.

March 25th - rest day, reading, writing - we hardly need rest days because we do so little work the other days.

March 26th - very little work to do. We were told today that we would be moving. One member of the tent returned from hospital so I have company - six in the tent.

March 27th - very little work to do - did some practice blood tests.

March 28th - again only a little work, made work doing blood counts. Weather is now fine.

March 29th - usual work - a heavy thunderstorm in afternoon.

March 30th - Good Friday, a rest day. Very close and muggy.

March 31st - work again, very slack. Weather hot.

April 1st - rest day. Wrote letters etc.

April 2nd/5th - work, very slack. Warm days.

April 6th - was warned I would be moving with the Advance Party to Bougainville. No time given for departure. I was to be clerk. Hot day.

April 7th - spent day getting together stationery, forms etc. for the move so could set up an office on arrival.

April 8th - day off.

April 9th - returned to my job in the Pathology Lab. pending movement. A heavy storm in the afternoon.

April 10th - worked again today but the job has just about closed - only an odd job every now and then - certainly not enough for two people.

April 11th/14th - working as usual, really doing nothing.

April 15th - a day off.

April 16th - work again, little to do.

April 17th - warned to be packed ready to move at a moments notice, so packed in readiness.

April 18th - still no movement - waiting all day.

April 19th - returned to my old job pending movement and had quite a busy morning. Apparently our movement is awaiting plane space and they say there is little chance of getting on a plane now so we will have to wait for a boat.

April 20th - were told to pack the Pathology Lab. as we would be doing no further work. Spent all day packing the equipment.

April 21st - completed our packing - talk of a boat being available soon.

April 22nd - Sunday - rest day.

April 23rd - did nothing all day.

April 24th - did a few odd jobs in the morning, tidying up around the camp. No sign of movement and very little to do. I am still packed up but gradually unpacking.

April 25th - odd jobs - no movement.

April 26th - cutting wood - time hangs heavy.

April 27th/28th - cutting wood - obviously just for something to do.

April 29th - rest day, spent quietly.

April 30th/May 2nd - cutting wood. All are fed up with such a waste of hours. Very depressing cutting wood all day knowing it will never be used. Rain stopped work in morning of 2nd May.

May 3rd/4th - a few odd jobs only.

May 5th - very little to do. Were informed the advance party was to be prepared to leave tomorrow.

May 6th - rest day, packed for moving but no move today.

May 7th - packed again and at long last left the camp at 2.00 p.m. and arrived Torokina 4.30 p.m. Went to the site of our camp (the same as that originally occupied by 15th Field Ambulance). Found tents up and some work done on the site. Weather fine.

May 8th - started on orderly room (office) and spent the day getting things ship-shape. Fine weather, we wash in a creek nearby.

May 9th - still plenty of work, settling in, and a little clerical work, am sleeping in the orderly room.

May 10th - a dull wet day, quite cold and am wearing my jumper. A little more work making the place respectable and comfortable. Not a lot of work to do now that the preliminary arrangements made. Have a 24-hour vigil with the phone but will be relieved every second night.

May 11th - a little work but really very monotonous. The CO has arrived and sent for Sgt. Fenton (in charge of the office).

May 12th - a little more work now the CO is with us.

May 13th - Sgt. Fenton arrived and have some free time now.

May 14th - spent the day organising more office space so that the Head Quarters Orderly Room could be accommodated.

May 15th - a fair bit of work to do and we were both kept fairly busy. Wet again.

May 16th - work as usual. Rain in afternoon. Visited 106 CCS in evening to see some of my friends - had to walk home, about five miles.

May 17th - work easier today. Fine weather.

May 18th/19th - work as usual. Fine days.

May 20th - Frank Meek, the HQ clerk returned from holidays but I am still to remain in the orderly room for the present. Had the day off. Again to 106 CCS. Ted Cain has now joined us at the unit.

May 21st/25th - work in office, mainly fairly slack but some busy periods. Mainly fine.

May 26th - very little to do, had the afternoon free. Kept awake all night by vehicles being unloaded as more of the unit are arriving from Green Island.

May 27th - a day off. Writing and reading.

May 28th - there are now four of us in the office and not enough work for everyone.

May 29th - am doing a correspondence course in Cost Accounting with Sydney Technical College and am studying for an exam. A very slack day with little or no work.

May 30th/31st - slack, no work.

June 1st - some extra work today, so busy all day.

June 2nd/3rd - days off. Nights are now beautiful and fresh.

June 4th/5th - slack days. Did my exam in the evening, a fairly easy paper. Supervised by one of the officers.

June 6th/10th - easy days with only a little to do.

June 11th - seem to be indications of some move by "A" Company. Still building our camp.

June 12th/14th - very little to do.

June 15th - "A" Company prepared to leave for Numa Numa trail area. Not much work about.

June 16th - Cliff Watkins advised he was on his way home for discharge. Wally Claringbold (one of our old 10th mates) has advised he is now a dedicated Communist.

June 17th - had the day off and visited Ray Watkins at 106 CCS.

June 18th/19th - "A" Company moved and with them went Ted Cain, whom I got on well with.

June 20th - another day off. Les is feeling crook.

June 21st - Les to hospital - query diphtheria. Very little work.

June 22nd - very little work to do.

June 23rd - went to see Les in evening - he hasn't got diphtheria, only a throat infection - he is still not too good.

June 24th - "A" Company will now return from Numa Numa trail and with HQ will move to Soraken, north of Torokina.

June 25th - "A" Company returned and we are all preparing to move, packing the office etc.

June 26th - preparing to leave - we move on June 28th.

June 27th - saw Les, and in evening went to 100 CCS.

June 28th - preparations for final move and HQ was to leave shortly after tea. Loaded stores etc. all afternoon on barges. Went to beach at 7.00 p.m. and on board at 9.00 p.m. Sailed almost at once - an 8 hour trip, sea calm, bright moonlight. Settled down to sleep on a box that was a little too small. Didn't sleep much.

June 29th - arrived at F Beach, Soraken early in morning.

There is a gap here in my diary until 1st September – two months. I don't know the reason. This two months was spent with the unit doing all sorts of jobs, postal, in wards assisting nursing orderlies. We always had a few sick in the hospital we established, and a few battle casualties from the Buka Island area. I remember one officer who was brought in with a severe gunshot wound in his right groin. He was given surgery and had blood and plasma transfusions. He was quite distressed and the nursing orderlies wanted someone to sit with him during the night. I remember sitting with him to make sure he remained calm and didn't pull out his transfusion apparatus. I talked with him for a long time re-assuring him he was not going to die as he thought. He was very restless and later calmed down and slept and was a lot better next day and continued to make good progress until he was fit to be evacuated by barge to Torokina.

I also remember acting as assistant to the Medical Officer at a post-mortem, handing instruments and clamps to the MO as he tried to determine the cause of death. This took quite a long time and at the end I was left with the job of stitching up and making the body ready for burial in a hessian shroud.

Time was spent here on various office jobs, postal work, and general relieving duties throughout the unit.

The Pathology Laboratory was also re-established but there was not a lot of work and most of it could be handled by the Sergeant. However, I relieved and assisted when there were busy times. Later when the Sergeant was away on leave I had to do all the work here for two weeks. (They allowed certain personnel two weeks home leave in Australia, by air now that the actual fighting was nearly over.)

The Japanese surrender on Bougainville took place on 8th September 1945.

From 1st September 1945 the diary resumes.

1st/8th September - spent working in Pathology as the Sergeant is away on leave. Plenty of work to do, mainly blood counts. Have been getting up early for an early morning swim before breakfast. The Sergeant returned from leave on 7th and this relieved me of a lot of the work.

On 8th September the Japanese on Bougainville surrendered.

9th/16th September - on 9th September censorship of our mail was discontinued. Spent some time reconciling the canteen books which were in a mess and would not balance. Still continuing to work in Pathology and we are both kept fairly busy. Some Chinese civilians and three French missionaries have been admitted to hospital with us for treatment. Am also looking after the receipt and forwarding of mail for the unit.

15th/20th September - some Japanese have been brought in, all in a starved condition, jittery, stark, and all very low. Our staff cleaned them up as best they could. Work is easing now. Two of our companies, "A" and "B", left for Torokina on 19th so we are now only half our number. A few more Japanese have been admitted, and we send them down to Torokina as soon as possible.

21st September - received a notice that I had been appointed an Instructor in Commercial Subjects at Torokina University (correct name Torokina Rehabilitation

Training Centre). As the CO is away I have to wait for his return before proceeding to Torokina.

24th September - on return of CO was told I would be going to Torokina by hospital launch on 25th, so had to hand over my postal duties and prepare to move.

25th September - to Torokina - left at 8.00 a.m., arrived at 12.00 noon, went to the unit camp ("A" & "B" companies) and settled in to a tent with some others.

26th September - went to the "University" for an interview, was told I would probably be teaching six mornings a week and the scheme would start as soon as text books were available.

28th/30th September - went to the "University" in mornings preparing for our classes. In afternoons did some cost accounting studies myself and went to see various old members of the 10th Field Ambulance who are in the 15th now. There are no lights in our camp so not able to do study of an evening.

1st/6th October - at the "University" taking classes etc. Filled in my demobilisation papers as the war now well and truly over. The only difficulty is finding transport back to Australia.

8th/30th October - mornings at "University" - the "students" were continually changing and it was difficult to teach them as a group. Some wanted to know how to prepare Income Tax Returns, others business bookkeeping etc.

1st/3rd November 1945 - at school each day in the morning, the afternoons were free. Was told I was made Acting Sergeant.

4th November 1945/4th January 1946 - At school in the day time, six days a week. Was also made Unit Orderly Sergeant - main duty to be present at mess parades and to see that lights were out at 10 p.m. Very little to do at school as numbers diminishing.

5th January - we left Torokina by boat and arrived in Brisbane on 8th January 1956 and were held there in various staging camps until we returned to Melbourne on 3rd February 1946 to begin our demobilisation procedure which took until 14th March 1946 when I was finally discharged.

Procedure was:

Leave from 5/2/46 to 2/3/46

Returned to LTD (Leave and Transit Depot) 2/3/46

Granted leave to 4/3/46

At Discharge Depot 6/3/46 to 13/3/46 for

Dental Examination

Medical

Rehab. Interview

Kit inspection and return of items

Visit to Watsonia for final pay

Issue of Discharge Certificate.

Allan Williams

10th Australian Field Ambulance

2000

APPENDIX A

Vale Colonel Ted Palmer

On the 5th August, 1982 Colonel Palmer died after a series of strokes. On learning of this some months later a notice was placed in the “Sun” by our Secretary, however there are doubtless some who are reading this sad news for the first time. Any words of mine would be superfluous as Murdoch McMillian obtained a copy of the address given at Ted’s Cremation by His Honour Mr. Justice Selby and this is now reproduced.

“I am proud and grateful to have been asked to speak at this sad time. If I were asked to say what I thought were the most admirable qualities a man could have, I would find it hard to put them in what might be called an order of merit but they would certainly include courage, integrity, unselfishness and humility. These were qualities which Ted Palmer possessed in abundant measure.

I first got to know him well in New Britain in the dark days of the war - the first quarter of 1942. He had joined the survivors of the Rabaul garrison who were trying to make their way back to the New Guinea Mainland. As time went on, men grew weak with hunger, with fever and with deadly fatigue. Ted suffered with the rest of us but in his quiet way he showed us the true meaning of courage and of greatness. If a man became too weak to carry even the weight of his miserable pack, Ted would carry that pack in addition to his own. When we halted for the night and boiled the taro roots which were to be our evening meal, he would refuse to eat his pathetically small portion until he had tended the last of the wounded and desperately ill. When we set out in the morning, he stayed behind until he had treated the last of those who urgently needed his care. When his small stock of medical supplies ran out, he improvised with wonderful ingenuity. A tin of axle grease which he had found at an abandoned saw-mill became an ointment for tropical ulcers. He ground up coral and rusty nails and boiled them in water to make an iron tonic. It is only because of his unstinting help and his inspiration that many of us are alive today.

Throughout it all he never lost his sense of humour. One day as we were going down a winding, muddy track he missed his footing and fell down the steep slope, finishing up on the track below. When we reached him, he got to his feet, laughing, and said “I just thought I’d take a short cut.”

Another time, when he was shaking with fever, he swam a fast-flowing river barely reaching the far bank. It was our third river crossing that day. As he lay, gasping for breath, he laughed again and said “To think I used to tell my patients that they must stay in bed for at least twenty-four hours after their temperature became normal.”

His way of making light of things which seemed near disaster was one of the things by which he kept us all going when going seemed to be futile and all but impossible.

When we reached the stage where we could go no further, the men were gathered into three separate groups and every week Ted would visit each group, travelling by canoe and walking along the jungle track to tend and encourage the sick and wounded.

Desperately sick men were kept alive by the knowledge that he was coming and all their thoughts were “when will Major Palmer come?” and he never failed them.

In the long nights in New Britain, with no lights and no other way of passing the time, Ted and I would sit under the stars and talk for hours. Always his talk would come back to his family and his pride in them, and his love of them shone out. How fully that has been reflected in the patient care and understanding which his wife Lesley has given him in his long illness.

After he had been rescued and recovered his strength he served in New Guinea and Borneo with the 10th Field Ambulance where he was known as Jungle Ted and became a Legend amongst the sick and wounded. Today some harsh things are being said of the medical profession but it is still a great and noble calling with a proud record of service. Ted Palmer typified all that is best and finest in that profession.

In Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar", Mark Anthony paid generous tribute to his former enemy, Brutus in words which are so often quoted:

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world "This was a man!"

Spoken of Ted Palmer, these words would be truly apt.

To his family, I offer my deep and sincere sympathy. May I offer you the small place of comfort which must come from the knowledge that all who mourn him today will always hold his memory with affection and great regard. To have known him has been a rare privilege. To have been regarded as a friend is something for which to be grateful for all my days."

APPENDIX B

Details of Dutch Trading Vessels

We have been able to identify the vessels mentioned in your letter dated 13th July. The “MAETSUYCKER” and “BOTH” were owned by KPM (Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij = Royal Packet Navigation Co.) who used to run liner services within and around the (then) Dutch Indies. The “KLIPFONTEIN” on the other hand belonged to the fleet of VNS (Vereenigde Nederlandsche Scheepvaartmaatschappij = United Netherlands Navigation Co.).

KPM merged with Royal Interocean Lines (RIL) in 1966 and four years later RIL as well as VNS amalgamated with two other shipping companies to form the present-day Nedlloyd Group. The following particulars will be of interest to you:

MV “MAETSUYCKER” built in 1937 of 4131 GRT was sold in 1960. She was of an advanced design “with mechanical ventilation, smoke detectors and echo sounder”.

SS “BOTH” built in 1931 of 2608 GRT and sunk at Padang during Sumatra rebellion on 16th April 1958.

MV “KLIPFONTEIN” (II) built in 1939 of 10,544 GRT, twin-screw 17½ knots. She and her sister ships saw much service in the Pacific, carrying troops. Foundered off East Africa in 1953 after having hit a submerged object.

Unfortunately we are not in a position to supply photographs of these ships. You might try to buy them from members of the World Ship Society or from the Nautical Museum, Kattenburgerplein, Amsterdam.

Yours faithfully,

Koninklijke Nedlloyd Groep NV

Central Public Relations

APPENDIX C

Narrow Escapes – 1942 to 1945

1. Buna – 1943. Jungle Funeral (see page 65 of book)

Sgt Harry Cowan and myself usually carried out the task of burying the dead at Buna. We would go out at daybreak and prepare a grave along the road to Semimi. One day as we both prepared the grave, Sgt Cowan yelled out “Down!” As I fell to the ground a bullet passed over me, just missing by a few inches. This was fired by a Japanese in a nest made in a coconut tree just over the other side of the road from our camp. We knew it was there but did not think it would ever be occupied. Sgt Cowan had seen movement in the nest so he yelled out.

2. Popondetta (see page 89 of book)

One night while in bed at the Popondetta staging camp I heard something under my pillow. We slept on stretchers made from groundsheets stretched on two side poles and held from the ground on stakes. Mosquito nets were tucked in to prevent bites from mosquitoes. As I listened I realised something had got under the mosquito net so I got out of bed and as I did a rat dashed from my pillow and tried to grab me. When I got out I put my hand in the bed searching for it and luckily I grabbed it by the tail, got it out and threw it out of our sleeping hut. If I had not taken it by the tail I would have been bitten by it, resulting in scrub typhus and a possible trip by plane to Moresby – and most of those who made that journey died. The rat had bitten the top of my fountain pen proving it had strong teeth (we did not have ball pens in those days).

3. Dobadura (see page 120 of book)

One night quite late, we were just finishing up and getting ready for bed about 2200 hours, when all of a sudden a naked and armed man entered the tent where we worked and slept. He ordered us all out and told us to do what he said or he would shoot us, I was already in bed so was prodded by the rifle and getting out of bed when he held the rifle to my head and preparing to fire, when Sgt Cowan came behind and grabbed the rifle and the shot went up through the roof. One of us was able to slip under the tent on the “troppo’s” first arrival and go for help. We had difficulty getting him back to Moresby but eventually arranged for him to fly back with Jim Lyall holding a pistol to his head.

4. Lae – an Enemy Plane

While Alan Sharp and myself were swimming in the Butibum River one afternoon, an enemy plane flew over and fired its guns on us. First I knew it was an enemy was when I heard and felt the bullets flying past my right ear. I immediately dived down and I was so long down that Alan thought I had been hit.

5. Finschafen – A Huge Wave

One afternoon about 4 p.m. I decided to have a little rest from the office and go for a walk along the beach. As I went along, a huge wave came in from the sea, picked me up and carried me up about 15 feet into the branches of a tree. I thought now I will have to hold on to a branch otherwise I would be carried by the wave back into the sea and dashed into the rocks which were all along there. So I immediately grabbed a strong branch with both hands and hung on tight. As the wave went back to the sea it pulled on me and I only just held on. I climbed down from the tree and a passer-by said “what were you doing up in that tree?” This was the only tree along the foreshore in that whole area.

6. In Bougainville I Missed a Sniper

While on duty around Buka in Bougainville, it was almost always that I was first up in the morning. I would walk from the tent across a small cleared area to the latrines for wash, shave etc. One day I was asked to go to a section of the unit further up, and the lad who took my place as “first up” was shot dead by a Japanese sniper.

Allan Williams

10th Australian Field Ambulance

2010

APPENDIX D

I Nearly Missed the 10th Field Ambulance

When war commenced in 1939 I was employed by G.J. Coles & Coy in the Buying Records Department of their Head Office. This office kept all the records of buying and selling of goods.

Mr. A.W. Coles commenced in 1940 to set up the Australian Army Canteen Service. They bought and arranged distribution of goods to all army canteens.

The whole organisation was planned and set up in our office mainly by volunteer overtime. Some buyers joined the service. I became a volunteer and worked at night. I was asked if I would join the canteen service but I refused.

During 1940 I became a qualified accountant and was asked would I volunteer to work for the navy office on two nights from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. to assist them in personnel records and general accounting. So I agreed and was now working all day and three hours each night for five days per week.

Then Mr. A.W. Coles was appointed chairman of the Rationing Commission and he took staff from our office to set up his new office. I was asked to join but said 'no'. I wanted to be in the army as my Dad was in the First World War.

During 1940 I worked all day and nearly every night so had a busy time. In late 1940 all males 18 to 30 years old had to register for war service. I was called to attend a camp at Seymour with the 10th Field Ambulance from early January 1941 to 23rd April – a three-months camp.

So I did not escape my duty with the army.

Allan Williams

10th Australian Field Ambulance


2012

APPENDIX E

WW2 Nominal Roll - Certificate for Leonard Allan Williams

World War Two Service

**CORPORAL
LEONARD ALLAN WILLIAMS
V30927**



SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	24 APRIL 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH	LONGWARRY, VIC
DATE OF ENLISTMENT	23 AUGUST 1940
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT	BLACKBURN, VIC
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT	RINGWOOD, VIC
NEXT OF KIN	WILLIAMS, LEONARD
DATE OF DISCHARGE	14 MARCH 1946
POSTING AT DISCHARGE	17 AUST FD AMBULANCE

 **Australian Government**
Department of Veterans' Affairs

APPENDIX F

Abbreviations Used

A&D Book	Admission/Discharge Book kept by all medical units
ADMS	Assistant Director Medical Services - the senior medical officer for a Division
ADS	Advanced Dressing Station - formed by the Ambulance Unit
AGH	Australian General Hospital
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AMR&O	Australian Military Rules and Orders
ANGAU	Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit
ASC	Army Service Corps
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BAP	Battalion Aid Post - similar to a RAP
BDE	Brigade
BN	Battalion
BSP	Bearer Staging Posts
CAV	Cavalry
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station
CMF	Citizens' Military Force
CO	Commanding Officer - of a unit eg. 10th Field Ambulance
DDMS	Deputy Director of Medical Services - the senior medical officer for an Army or Force
DIV	Division
FDP	Forward Dressing Post - right at the front with the troops
HQ	Head Quarters
HQ NGF	Head Quarters - New Guinea Force
INF	Infantry
LTD	Leave and Transit Depot
MDS	Main Dressing Station - formed by the Ambulance Unit
MO	Medical Officer

MV	Motor Vessel
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer - eg. Warrant Officer, Sergeant, Corporal
O/R's	Personnel other than Officers – “Other Ranks”
RAP	Regimental Aid Post - usually with each Battalion
REGT	Regiment
RMO	Regimental Medical Officer - attached to a Battalion
SB	Stretcher Bearers
SMO	Senior Medical Officer - of a Brigade
SS	Steam Ship
T	Transport (ship)
WE	War Establishment - the amount of stores allowed a unit
WO	Warrant Officer