

2/28 AUST INF BN. FROM 1 SEP 43 - 30 SEP 43.

REF MAP : BUHA EAST 1/63360

- 1 Sep 43. An easy day for the Bn while other Bns do their stuff.  
1830 hrs. Commenced move back to camp from Bde exercise.  
2030 " Arrived back in camp.
- 2 Sep 43. Received ~~retire~~ Movement Order and warning that we would be  
fostering 2/23 Aust Inf Bn morning 3 Sep  
1400 hrs. Bn parade prior to Bde parade and address by Lieut General Sir  
Edmund HERRING KCB., DSO., MC., ED., GOC 1 AUST CORPS.  
1915 " Comds conference at Bde. Also conference of Adjts and QM's.
- 3 Sep 43.  
0800 hrs. 2/23 Aust Inf Bn arrived and were fed twice.  
1230 " 2/23 " left.
- 4 Sep 43. D.Day Operation, Movement and Adm Orders by the score. Warned  
that we would leave in the morning. Appendix A.1. Field Return.
- 5 Sep 43.  
REF MAP LAE 1/63360 & 1/25000.  
BUSU 1/25000 and LAE MALAHANG Overprint 1/10000.
- 0500 hrs. Reveille.  
0700 " Left camp and the L.O.B. cleaning up.  
0830 " Arrived embarkation point, where we were mucked about to no  
mean order before we finally embarked on L.C.I. at 1000 hrs.  
1013 " Convoy pulled out.  
2230 " Arrived destination. RED BEACH square 9339. Scenes of indescrib-  
able confusion and Bde spread over half the country side.
- 6 Sep 43.  
0645 hrs. Bde Comds 'O' Gp orders given for Bde 'O' Gp to Rv at ALUKI 8943  
0800 " Arrived ALUKI and duly sat around.  
1145 " Bde Comds 'O' Gp proceeded to vicinity of APO village 8443.  
1255 " Bn under Maj. BROWN left ALUKI.  
1635 " Arrived APOE and settled down in tac Bivouac (See Map Appx. B 1.
- 7 Sep 43.  
0700 hrs. After very wet uncomfortable night Bn assumed adv gd role to  
the Bde and proceeded to River BUREP.  
1600 " Van Gd D.Coy (Capt WALLACE) arrived River BUREP and relieved  
one coy 2/23 Aust Inf Bn, which had arrived ~~16~~ previously.  
1700 " Bn in posn 784426. Tiger and Standing patrols sent out.  
Rations landed at BUREP mouth during night by L.C.V. (See Map  
Appendix B2).
- 8 Sep 43. *in action*  
0240 hrs. Pte S NOBLE ~~accidentally~~ killed on patrol.  
Orders received for Bn to proceed with all speed to the BUSU  
River and form firm base on East bank.  
0800 " Van Gd moved fwd. 'D' Coy-(Capt. WALLACE) taken over at 1200 hrs  
by 'C' Coy (Capt. NEWBERRY).  
1600 " Arrived East bank of BUSU still no opposition but traces of  
recent occupation by the enemy.  
Van Gd observed two enemy on far bank.  
Received Warning Order for dawn attack with the object of es-  
tablishing firm base on West Bank.
- 9 Sep 43.  
0300 hrs. B Coy patrol under Lieut. BENNESS left to recce suitable cross-  
ing 300x from mouth of river (See Appendix B 3).  
0530 " B.Coy patrol reported river impassable that area. Dawn attack  
postponed.  
0707 " Second patrol from B.Coy Lieut. WARREN recce river 742413 re-  
ported river still impassable obstacle. However patrol killed  
two Japs. A good show. (See Appendix B.3.).  
0701 " Patrol from A.Coy Lieut ROOKE attempted crossing 746403 report  
nil progress.  
Patrol then established themselves on island 746403. (See AppxB3)

9 Sep 43.  
0843 hrs.

C.O. (Lt-COL. NORMAN) ordered 9 pl to make crossing at mouth of river on sandbar. 'A' Coy (Capt LYON) less 9 pl to cover crossing by 9 pl with fire from 746403.

0914 " 9 pl attempted crossing and were fired on from West bank. Of the 2 fwd scouts one was killed and one wounded. Mortar fire was brought down on every posn and pl withdrew to former posn. A Coy less 8 pl withdrew to East bank of river (See Appx B 3).

1250 " Orders received that 2/28 Bn would cross BUSU and establish bridgehead on West bank. Zero hour 1730 hrs. Comd Offrs plan 2/28 Bn to cross BUSU 4 waves in extended line from 743403 to 745402. S.L. fwd edge of island 745404 to 747403. Zero hr 1730 hrs. On attaining objective far shore A and B Coys to form perimeter for remaining coys to cross and then exploit to line of creek 741401 on re-organisation A & D Coys to be on the right. B & C Coys left Bn HQ centre of perimeter (App B 3)

1700 " Bn left Assembly Area on East Bank and formed up in rear of S.L. as above -

1730 " Order of crossing B.A. Bn HQ C, D Coys. B. Coy crossed S.L. remainder of Bn following in above order. Crossing extremely hazardous nos of the men being swept off their feet and carried down stream to the sand bar. Crossing was made under enemy fire S.A. fire directed chiefly on the left flank at sand bar. Capt. HANNAH B. Coy Comd. was first over. Whole Bn with the exception of approx 30 men reached the far bank eventually, 13 of these 13 are reported missing and must be assumed drowned. The crossing was a remarkable achievement and must rank as the high light of the IAE campaign.

1830 " Bn had re-organised in posns, slightly to the East of intended line but maintaining formation ordered. Enemy opposition was confined to LMG, HMG and some Mortar fire directed mainly to sand spit and our left flank. At this stage an excellent job was done by the Int Sgt - Sgt CROUCHLEY who although slightly wounded re-crossed the river with the object of establishing communications and giving the Bde comd the situation. (25% of the automatic weapons were lost and approx 80 rifles).

2330 " L/T established thanks to the splendid efforts of Sgt CROUCHLEY the Pnr Pl and 'B' Coy of the 2/43 Bn. Throughout the night it rained incessantly and everyone was extremely wet and miserable. (See Appendix No B 3 Map)

10 Sep 43.  
0600 hrs.

C.O. made his plan and gave orders for C. Coy to relieve B. Coy who were to pass through 'A' Coy on the right and adv down west bank of creek 741401. D Coy to pass through A. Coy and adv towards coast on B. Coy's right flank.

1000 hrs B. Coy passed through A. Coy and C. Coy occupied 'B' Coy's former posn.

1200 " Enemy counter attacked on C Coys left flank. Attack was beaten off and casualties inflicted on the enemy. Sgt MACGREGOR 14 pl was killed during the action whilst doing a splendid job.

1500 ~~1400~~ " 14 Pl (Lieut. BROOKS) put in attack against enemy posns on East bank of creek 741401 going was extremely hard and a highly successful action was fought in chest deep swamp 63 of the enemy being killed; 3 SMG's with bayonets and 5 LMG's being captured. Our casualties were 4 killed 17 wounded all the wounded being recovered and successfully evacuated by our own RAP and a sec of the 2/3 Fd Amb. 15 pl supported 14 pl attack throughout.

1600 " Further counter attack on C. Coy by the enemy, who it appears were endeavouring to infiltrate along the beach. Attack was beaten off with further casualties to the enemy.

Dad in 14 Platoon and was wounded in both groins in this action

10. Sep. 43.  
1600 hrs.

During afternoon the Bn area was subjected to harrassing fire from MMG's and Mortar. Our MMG's, Mortars and the 25 pdrs continually harrassed enemy posns along beach.

1730 "

D. Coy moved into posn 739401 and was fired on from enemy posns at 73854005 the fire was immediately returned with every available weapon and the post quietened.

1730 *hrs*

Our casualties to date 7 killed 21 wounded 13 missing (for Bn ~~tracing~~ posns see trace Appendix B.3.). 'B' Coy 2/43 Bn occupied posn on C. Coy's right flank to fill gap between C and D Coys.

11 Sep 43.  
0930 hrs

C.O. went round coy posns and gave orders for one pl A. Coy to relieve D. Coy.

1455 "

A. Coy less 9 pl to adv between West bank of creek 739400 and track 738402 - 737400. D. Coy to take over A. Coy area.

1640 "

A. Coy less 9 pl report posn 740403 and located enemy diggings this area, no opposition.

1700 "

A. Coy less 9 pl reached objective 739401 and located 4 dead Japs one MMG u/s and one IMG. Reported no sign of enemy.

2/43 Bn passed through to take up posn in Assembly Area 742404 prior to adv to cut rd between OLD and NEW YANGA. Supplies landed on sand spit 745401 by L.C.V. during night. Appendix B.3.

12 Sep 43.

Quiet day A. Coy patrolling West to 729405.

Received order 2/28 Bn to be prepared to adv along coastal track and capture enemy strong point 7239.

A. Coy ordered to adv from present location 739400 to 729405 and form firm base. B. Coy to move into present posn A. Coy.

1530 hrs.

Bn commenced move from 742403 to form Bn perimeter vicinity A. Coy 730396.

1535 "

Bde H.Q. moved into our old posn. Some excitement caused by Jap snipers firing on ferry and Bde area from vicinity 741404.

1700 "

Bn less D. Coy established 731395. Area not large enough to permit usual Bn perimeter so series of coy localities formed along track - interlocking.

1945 "

C. Coy patrol located enemy 728394, patrol threw grenades and Jap returned with rifle fire no casualties. Appx. B3.

13 Sep 43.  
0040 hrs

12 Japs approached C. Coy area from West, at 25 yards distance apparently observed our posns.

As they dispersed and went to ground, area was swept by fire from fwd pl. No results observed.

0300 "

Lieut. BURTON shot - killed immediately.

0823 "

D. Coy reported in and relieved C. Coy as fwd coy.

0900 "

Patrol from B. Coy patrolled North of their posn.

1100 "

B. Coy patrol returned NTR.

1038 "

D. Coy patrol proceeded West along track.

1120 "

D. Coy patrol contacted enemy 727393 estimated strength one pl. Our patrol suffered.

Lieut. CONNOR killed 3 OR's wounded. Patrol fixed 17 pl did right encirclement. Enemy casualties 12 killed.

1205 "

Enemy shelled our posns, mostly fell in the sea.

1230 "

2/28 Bn C.O. D. Coy to move fwd and fix enemy posns track junction 725304 by 1430 hrs. A. Coy to do right encirclement and attack down track 72453945 to 72463940 on success B. Coy to pass through and exploit limit of exploitation 100 yards. C. Coy to follow A. Coy and deny track North of A. Coy to the enemy D. Coy to establish area 727394.

1515 "

A. Coy commenced move.

13 Sep 43.  
1530 hrs.

D.Coy reached track junction unopposed. B.Coy passed through and continued adv along coast track. Dump area occupied without opposition. Bn took up perimeter posns as shown on trace Appendix B.3.

14 Sep 43.  
0625 hrs

D.Coy patrol Lieut. HALL moved out to recon route from 723393 to rd 716394 preparatory to 'B' & A Coys launching attack on MALAHANG ANCHORAGE.

C.Coy patrol Lieut. HINDLEY adv along coast to try and contact enemy posns. Bde O.O. - PIB patrolling inland on right flank not West of track 725394. 2/43 Bn to capture WAGAN. 2/32 Bn to move to track junction 724394 probable role securing of rd and track junction at 40 grid. Bn O.O.

A and B Coys to do right encirclement to cut track 716394 and then to attack ANCHORAGE from the North. D.Coy to follow A.Coy and protect rear of A and B Coys when cutting of rd completed. G.Coy to fix enemy on coast. On success coys to re-organise forming perimeter round ANCHORAGE.

0915 hrs

C.Coy patrol Lieut. HINDLEY edging forward report 12 enemy killed without loss.

1029 "

Enemy shelled our posns inflicting casualties 1 killed 18 wounded incl Lieut OBORNE.

1100 "

A and B Coys, B Coy leading, commenced encirclement. Progress very slow.

1154 "

Mortars opened fire on ANCHORAGE Area 12 rds per mortar.

1200 "

Our Arty shelled wreck and ANCHORAGE Area.

1315 "

B.Coy reports posn 716393 progress very slow, and the suspense at Tac HQ is acute.

1344 "

Lieut. HINDLEY reports 14 Japs killed at 1240 hrs the Bn score is now 155.

1400 "

2/32 Bn report contacted enemy at 718399.

1429 "

B.Coy report capture of two 75 M.M. dual purpose guns. area 716392. Also large party of Japs in the rear.

1545 "

D.Coy in posn astride rd. A & B moving to form perimeter. C.Coy in posn 718391 one man killed.

1550 "

A and B in posn casualties light.

1635 "

C.Coy edging fwd meeting considerable enemy opposition from bottle neck 71753914 encirclement impossible due to nature of country and creek on right flank. posn very sticky and C.O. ordered C.Coy to withdraw after suffering 1 killed 4 wounded casualties.

1720 "

A and B Coys to hold present perimeter C and HQ Coys to form separate perimeter. Appendix B 3.

Bn casualties for above operation 2 killed 8 wounded incl Lieut KENNEDY.

Enemy casualties not yet known, but 5 more killed by A Coy trying to escape from posn in front of C.Coy, ~~the picking off of enemy by rifle fire.~~

15 Sep 43.

Portion of Jap O.O. captured for the evacuation of LAE. Bde O.O. received. Bde to continue adv on LAE with all possible speed. 2/28 Bn to maintain firm base ANCHORAGE and patrol West to BUMBU River.

0713 hrs

A.Coy patrolled East to contact ~~ENEMY~~ 'C' Coy as ordered by C.O. A. Coy suffered one casualty accidentally wounded. Bn tally of enemy killed 188 - counted.

0830 "

Approx Bn move into perimeter at ANCHORAGE (See trace Appendix B.).

1655 "

B.Coy ordered to patrol West to BUMBU.

B.Coy. Lieut. WARREN patrol returned an excellent patrol reported area clear of enemy to East bank of BUMBU but enemy occupying wired strong point 70243880 Appendix B 3.

*1/2/28 Bn ordered to capture anchorage and be prepared to adv to hut area 711391*

*4 D Coy*

15 Sep 43.  
0315 hrs.

B. Coy observed movement on their front and opened fire. Movement subsequently turned out to be a party of Natives evacuating from SALAMABA. Unfortunately one man was killed and a woman later died of wounds. A third native girl was brought in for interrogation and sent on to 2/17 Bn for subsequent forwarding to Div.

0700 hrs

Bde O.C. received for attack on LAE and 2/28 Bn less 2 pl to move to area 712398 and become the reserve, a rare role for this unit. 2 pl to harrass enemy posns 70243880 from Zero to Z plus 30 and deny coast route to the enemy. C.O.'s. 'O' Gp and orders given for the move. Order of march A, D, HQ Coy B and C. Coys.

0800 "  
1200 "

Arrived area 712398. Warning from Bde to be on 5 min notice to move by 1230hrs. Our Airforce has been pounding LAE defences all morning. We have 2 Sqdns of MITCHELLS one Sqdn BOSTONS and one Sqdn of MORTRESSES in support.

1300 "  
1325 "

And Zero hour Arty and 2 pl 2/28 commence their "hates". 2/26 ordered to move due West to River BUMBU and take over Bridgehead at bridge 702399.

1330 "  
1520 "  
1600 "

Bn moved A. Coy as Van Gd. 2/32 occupied LAE without opposition. Anti climax. Bn occupying posns astride River BUMBU at bridge 702399. A night's rest anticipated free from worry. Bn tally of enemy killed during operation 194. Weapons captured 2 x75 mm DP guns; 1 MMG; 7 LMG's; 3 SMG with bayonets 1 Hy MG. Appendix B 3.

17 Sep 43.

The Bn on it's back, and washing, both are being enjoyed to the full.

1700 hrs.

C.O. conference and order given to move at first light to SAWMILL area 7044.

18 Sep 43.

Move to SAWMILL postponed and we commence to clean up LAE. MAJ. BROWN 2 i/c in charge of operations. Appendix B2.

19 Sep 43.

0800 hrs.

Bn parade and address by C.O. Congratulations by GOC and Corps Comd. passed on to the men.

0810 "

Memorial Church parade (Appendix A 2 Field Return). (Appx A.3. Notes on operations RED BEACH - LAE 5 Sep - 16 Sep 43) Visit by BRIG. J.E. LLOYD DSO., MC.

20 Sep 43.

Quiet day. Continued to clean up LAE area. Finished this task today.

21 Sep 43.

1330 hrs.

Commenced move to SAWMILL Area 717449. advised that we would stage there over night, prior to crossing the BUSU early 22 Sep 43.

1530 "

Arrived area 717449.

22 Sep 43.

0700 hrs.

Adv party moved out to recce Bn area 712464.

0830 "

Main Body left for above area.

1017 "

Bn HQ established 712464.

1700 "

Bn complete in new area.

23 Sep 43.

(Appendix A 4. Report by LT-COL. C.H.B. NORMAN M.C. on LAE Operations).

24 Sep 43.

1500 hrs.

Comds conference at Bde.

1630 "

Coy Comds conference. Adm and details of IOB personnel.

25 Sep 43.

(Appendix 5 Field Returns).

26 Sep 43.

27 Sep 43.

Coy Trg commenced. (Appendix ~~4~~ Trg Instr).

A6

There has been much happened these last few weeks, but thank God it just seems like a bad dream now, and does not worry me at all. The going was tough, now that its over one wonders how human flesh and blood made it as we did, and just what kept us going. Day and night we were soaked to the skin, Rain I never saw its equal, then rivers all flood swollen, some up to your armpits, then mud knee deep and we were loaded like pack mules but still we made it and in pretty good time. The main river we had to cross was in flood. Never will I forget the sight of men being swept down and twisted, turned and bobbing like corks, some to be carried out to sea, others luckier on to a sand bar, where river and sea met. There was a period when I thought my number was up, poor old Frank Davies, pretty helpless he is most of the time, got swept off his feet and I grabbed him and pulled him up only to go under myself and so we went down the river but by swimming one hand I got near enough to the other bank to push him in to where some of the boys grabbed him. I went down about another 20 yards and managed to grab a rifle held out to me, never did Mother Earth feel so sweet, as I lay where I was pulled out. That night we lay in a large Kunai Grass patch, while the little yellow devils machine gunned us, not very comfortable lying there and seeing his tracer bullets cut the grass about one's noodle. There was one killed and several wounded right alongside of me, and everytime he opened up I said my prayers and meant them as never before. It poured nearly all night and when dawn broke we were grateful and moved forward to attack but met no enemy, so came back a bit and dug in. About 10 o'clock ~~XXXXXX~~ he attacked us and we beat him off. Tried to eat some bully for dinner, but it just wouldn't go down. Were told to prepare for attack for about 3pm and we were more than ready, as we were like rabbits in the Kunai Grass that grows thicker than a wheat crop and about 6 to 8ft. high and you can't see 3 ft. in front or around you. Zero hour we were advancing, strange to say what fear we had lying waiting left us and we were all for it. About 60 yards we went and there they were laying behind bushes in the water and reeds and we got stuck into them. They screamed like hell those little yellow boys and we laid it on thick and heavy. Some of our boys went down, but it wasn't long and we had them beat, orders came for us to withdraw, but as we had several wounded to fix up we didn't. I forgot to mention that ~~right at the start a hand grenade dropped near me and I got some on the hand, arm and ribs~~ but it was just skin deep and then about 10 minutes later, I copped a bullet in my right leg about halfway between the knee and the groin, it put me on my knees for a minute or two and then I forgot about it and went in for my pound of flesh and was on my feet right through to the finish. There were only 5 of us left the others had withdrawn, Frank Davies was one he appeared from nowhere. I was coming at them with my Tommy Gun when a Jap opened up with his machine gun and wounded Frank and the other chap slightly so he decided to go for help, the next thing I knew I was on the ground, floundering around like a chook with its head off, they had got a burst into my left leg about the same place as in the right. I pulled myself together and said to Frank to try and crawl back a bit, as he was right on us where we were. I was pulling myself along on my tummy a few inches at a time along a little narrow pad in the grass, when I raised my head and imagine my feelings when there was a Jap crawling towards me, one we had evidently missed in out advance. We looked at each other for what seemed an eternity and then he bounded to his feet and sprang at me, what power whether self-preservation or fear that gave me the strength to get to my feet I guess I'll never know, but we just seemed to spring into each other he had a grenade in his right hand, and I grabbed ~~his wrist and sunk my other hand into his throat, we wrestled for a while and then I threw him and got on top, I don't remember much more, I must have gone berserk, because when a party came back to carry us out they had the devils job to get my hand from his throat and he was one less to ever worry us.~~ They carried me back to the R.A.P. and dressed my wounds then I don't remember much more till I was under canvas and a chap giving me a drink of tea the first for 3 days and I never tasted anything so good in my life before. That night we camped there and all night his mortar bombs howled away over head to hear them crash in the jungle. Next morning early, stretcher bearers carried me thru' mud, slush and rain to the beach. These stretcher bearers are our own chaps not Fuzzies and are wonderful, words can not do them justice, the job they do and as gentle as women. At the beach we got on a jeep and away we went, and nearly all got drowned in a river that was in flood, we eventually arrived at the next stage. We stayed there a day then on again, was operated on at the next place, and so gradually by degrees we came back, travelling in allkinds of things. About ten days after getting hit we came to hospital, mattresses, sheets and pillows and good food

never will I forget that experience of sheets again after lying for 10 days between wet blankets on a stretcher. I met a Padre there who promised to write for me so I hope you received word from him. We moved on again, another hospital, beds, sheets etc, and Roast Beef, never has food tasted so wonderful and I was starving as I ate practically nothing all the time we were up there. We stayed there one night and left next morning and finished our journey up among the clouds, so it was quite a novelty. This is my home now for a fair while as it will be about Christmas before I am about again and it is very nice here too. I forgot to mention we were only 20 altogether when we attacked and next day they buried 115 Japs, not bad going, we are a bit pleased ourselves.



Sept.

D Coy 11-13 Sept

LD  
YANGA

D Coy  
10-11 Sept.

10-12 Sept.

9-11 Sept.

9 Sept.

B Coy 43rd  
10-11 Sept.

C Coy B  
Attack  
10 Sept.

En. counter  
attack 10 Sept.

9 Sept.

9 Sept.

9 Sept.

Benness

9 Sept.  
EUP.

9 Sept.  
Rooke

Singana Plantation

14 Platoon Assault



Article by Allan Henderson who was in Dad's Section and wounded in the same action.

## A TRIBUTE TO THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

Perhaps the least glamorous and consequently the least publicised section of the armed services, in time of war, is the medical arm. Sure! We've read much of the feats of men such as the legendary Weary Dunlop, the benefit of whose unremitting service to their fellowman during time of incarceration in prisoner of war camps was incalculable.

Similarly the magnificent dedication of so many medical men, of all ranks, in the field at time of conflict, and also of the women who cared for us on the road to recovery, was of infinite value and, unquestionably, many of us owe our lives to them.

I would like, if I may, to take you on a journey experienced by a young digger who was wounded during the "C" Coy assault in the Kunai Swamp at Lae, N.G., on 10th September 1943. The fact that that young soldier happened to be me is incidental and unimportant, excepting that the unfolding story is a first hand account as seen through the eyes of an actual participant. This is not my story, but an attempt to record a typical sequence of events in the medical handling and treatment of a battle casualty in the A.I.F. in the tropics.

In that fateful assault, we had been dishing it out to, and copping it back from, the Jap Company that had set up house on the only pieces of high ground in the swamp, leaving us to tread the many one man tracks that meandered through the 8 feet (2.4 metre) high Kunai grass in water generally waist deep, for perhaps 20 minutes, when the noise of battle began to subside markedly. The Japanese voices which had been so prevalent even above the volume of small arms fire and exploding hand grenades that were being exchanged; some voices of command; some of panic; some of agony, had faded away, and now the odd Aussie voice could be heard of men calling to mates.

It was apparent that we were getting on top.

I had become totally separated from the rest of the Platoon, as was not uncommon in that type of terrain, and was warily proceeding along this track, feeling that I was at last emerging from the swamp as the depth was now only a few inches above my knees. On hearing a noise from behind and to my left, I began to swing around, only to see the barrel of a Jap rifle poking through the Kunai and within inches of my left thigh. cont.

Before I could bring my rifle to bear, this crazy Jap, who obviously had no sense of humour, let me have it and moved back into his concealment, leaving me with a fractured femur, bleeding like a stuck pig, down in the water and barely able to keep my head above that water.

The blood was pumping out of me at an alarming rate and, seeing the water turning redder and redder all around me, I knew that I was in serious trouble. The last Aussie I had seen was stretcher bearer, Sid Laurie, who had cut across my track at right angles behind me a few minutes before hand and had called encouragement to me.

Sid was a Queenslander who had been a member of my 14 Platoon who, on return from the middle East and whilst we were training on the Atherton Tablelands prior to New Guinea, decided he had no taste for killing and swapped his rifle for first aid kit by transferring to the Stretcher Bearers. When approval was given for our assault to proceed, Sid automatically volunteered to accompany his old mates.

Anyhow! With very little hope of Sid or anyone else hearing me, I yelled in as loud a voice as I could muster "Sid! I'm in trouble" and promptly passed out.

The next I knew Sid was holding my head above the water and screaming at me to prop my own head up while he got a tourniquet on my thigh. I tried to warn him of the Son of Nippon concealed in the bullrushes and Sid yelled back "Never mind about him, keep your bloody head up, I've got to stop the bleeding". What with him having to work by feel below the water line and me lapsing in and out of consciousness, and allowing that he was completely defenceless and could have had his brains blown out at any second, it was some performance, but must have been an absolute nightmare for him. Somehow he got help with me and they dragged me out of the swamp.

Sid told me some 8 months later, when I had rejoined the battalion (briefly) on the Tablelands, that he had heard my call, by incredible good fortune had chosen the right path, and had stumbled over my now submerged body.

This remarkable fellow, to whom I undoubtedly owe my life, was responsible for several other acts of valour on that bloody afternoon, always under fire, and with complete disregard for his own safety, and he was quite rightly awarded the Military Medal for outstanding service.

cont.

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The trauma of these and subsequent events at Lae and Finschhafen took its toll on Sid's nervous system and he was medically downgraded and discharged prior to the Borneo campaign.

To get back to the chain of events...my first recollection after this was coming to at the regimental Aid Post which was simply a sparsely cleared area on the bank of the Busu River, where we had clambered ashore the evening before, and where Doc Barder and his medical offiders were fitting me with a Thomas splint, new dressings, and adjusting my tourniquet.

This team were working away with quiet, untroubled efficiency on the 17 casualties as they were brought back, without overhead cover or protection of any kind, except the tall Kunai grass between them and the enemy. One well placed mortar bomb from about 300 yards away would have made things extremely uncomfortable, but they were completely engrossed in their work.

That evening, the wounded were ferried across the Busu in a little aluminium dinghy which the Divisional Engineers had rigged on a pully and rope system as a sort of flying fox.

Once across the river we stretcher cases were carried back about a mile towards the Burep River by some unknown troops, 4 to a stretcher. These blokes were obviously not medical types, had never done this sort of thing previously, were not happy to be doing it, and were making one hell of a fist of it. It was pitch black by this time, raining like hell, and the track, which had been forged through the jungle by generations of fuzzy wuzzies, was designed for single file, so that two men abreast, with a stretcher between them, found the going somewhat more than difficult.

What with walking into trees face first, slipping on exposed roots and mud, being drenched to the skin and unhappy, their first reaction was towards self preservation and, with every misadventure, one or more of them would drop the stretcher and look out for himself. I swear I spent more time in the water and mud than on the canvas. Boy, what a ride! Even though half full of morphine I was not amused and let them know in no uncertain terms at one stage. Back came one of these exhausted, bedraggled specimens "It's alright for you, sport, you're just lying there, we're doing all the bloody work."

I had an urge to tell him I would love to be able to change places with him, but thought better of it as he sounded so desperate I thought me may cut my throat and toss me into the jungle. cont.

I had a need to get to wherever we were going and I hadn't the faintest idea where that was. Thereafter I limited my role in the act to a deliberately agonised scream each time I hit the deck.

I took them all of 4 hours to reach our goal and we were all so exhausted we didn't exchange hand shakes, fond adieus or even thankyou's at the end. This was some sort of a forward post of a Field Ambulance Unit, and all they could do, without cover or lighting (except a hand torch) was to poke us under the trees, hang a ground sheet over our heads to keep the incessant rain off and whack morphine into us periodically. They were impossible conditions in which to practice any level of medicine, but they were uncomplaining and tended us as best they could right through the night.

In the morning they carted those of us on stretchers down onto the beach and, shortly, two of those little platoon size Yankee landing barges on which we had trained at Trinity Bch, North of Cairns, nosed in toward shore. The big gun that the Japs had at Lae township lobbed 3 or 4 shells over and, though they landed harmlessly in the ocean, the Yank crewmen figured this was not their scene, and they scuttled out to sea and took off back towards Red Beach like bats out of hell, leaving us like shags on a rock.

The medics pulled us back into the trees and, 3 or 4 hours later, a string of jeeps, fitted with huge chains to their tyres, came ploughing down the beach and picked us up. The stretchers were bolted on to elevated brackets, one on each side of a jeep and though the Japs lobbed a few more shells over, these 9th Divvy drivers and their offsidiers didn't turn a hair and away we went as if on a highway at home.

Of course it was no highway, but a black, muddy strip, with creeks and rivers emptying into the ocean every few hundred yards. Fortunately they were a well organised unit and had a gang of men standing by, wherever there was a steep cutting, to manhandle us out and we made it to the casualty clearing station without incident.

I've never been sure if this very large area had been set up at the Burep River, Red Beach, or somewhere in between but it was well established with many troops about, including a large contingent of American landing barge crewmen. Quite obviously it was out of range of the big gun. The wounded were accommodated in standard 6 man tents and there was one large marquee as an operating theatre to which we were each taken for thorough examination, any necessary surgery and fresh dressing.

cont.

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Even though we were stark naked, wearing only our plastic identity tags, lying on an elevated army stretcher with a grey army blanket draped over us, we were high and dry, comfortable and travelling first class compared with the previous week. The nursing staff were all male but their treatment and handling, whilst certainly lacking TLC, was competent and adequate. A Jap spotter plane used of dawdle overhead each morning (always referred to as "Sewing Machine Charlie") so there was always the possibility that they may suffer a bombing attack - fortunately it never happened.

After a couple of days all the wounded were loaded onto a LCT Yankee landing craft en route for Buna. The stretcher cases were simply placed on the upper deck exposed to the elements and, although I can remember making personal contact with several billion mosquitoes in Papua/New Guinea, but don't remember seeing any blowflies, sure enough, after 2 or 3 hours of chugging down the coast in full sunlight it was discovered that my wound was fly-blown. The doctor was sent for and he removed the bandaging and proceeded to remove the maggot (I think) with a pad soaked in ether.

I wondered why, all the time this was going on and he was comforting me with the assurance that these little critters had saved many a limb in WWI by eating away infected flesh of wounded men left lying out in no man's land for long periods, he yet had a most concerned expression on his face, and spent some time examining the area very carefully.

Shortly afterwards the ship dropped anchor at Morobe, about halfway to Buna, and I was whisked ashore and was taken, again by jeep stretcher along a coconut palm corduroy road to a small field hospital for emergency surgery. The young Doc on board ship had correctly diagnosed that I had an infection known as "Gas Gangrene", a condition that, in pre-antibiotic days, required the urgent surgical removal of infected tissue in order to stop the rapid spread and save the limb.

I have no idea who that young Doc was but I have been ever grateful to him and his diligence - and to that friendly blow fly.

Next morning back on a barge, to Buna and thence by air to Pt Moresby by American DC3.

There were two Australian General Hospitals situated a few miles out of the town and home for me became the 2/9th AGH. Before leaving Buna we were pumped full of Morphia so that we would be perfectly relaxed during the plane trip across the Owen Stanley Range, cont.

during which these little crates were capable of clearing a couple of higher peaks by at least 5 feet - that was on a good day and there was visible evidence of a few that didn't make it on bad days.

Even in this painless, drug induced state, we were yet alert enough to know that we were in heaven once we were placed in the ward .... white enamelled steel beds with mattress and snow white sheets, soft white pillow, and angels in white floating about, gently sponging the last of the jungle mire from our carcasses and tending our every need.

Those nursing sisters and their Aides (VADs) were superb in pretty ordinary conditions. Living in tents, in very high humidity and eating the same meals as the troops, which were very poor by mainland hospital standards. Always brisk cheerful and attentive and, above all, caring. All of the Doctors were male and all the nurses and Aides female with perhaps the odd wardsman as general dogsbody, but it was the ladies who were the apple of our collective eye. They restored our dignity and, if I remember rightly, it was about a week before I realised that we were still actually on Terra Firma.

On the afternoon that we arrived at the AGH I had further surgery due to the persistence of Gas Gangrene, and was placed on a massive course of Sulpha-nulamide, the precursor of antibiotics, and then had a trouble free run until the 22nd Sept, 12 days after being wounded and the day on which we were being prepared for removal to a hospital ship by which we were headed each for his home state.

All the fellows in this ward were total bed cases with missing and smashed legs etc, and it was a most complicated procedure removing them from beds with limbs elevated, with pulley weights and all that sort of hospital paraphernalia, and making them travelworthy and comfortable on a stretcher prior to transportation by ambulance to the wharf.

A team of Doctors were working their way up this 20 bed ward preparing the patients, one at a time, on stretchers placed on the floor between beds, as a load was ready, the field ambulance boys would whisk them outside and away, to the applause of we who were waiting our turn.

They were working on the bloke in the bed next to mine and, amid all the excitement I noticed that the bandage round my leg was soaked with blood and asked the young VAD standing by my bed to have a look see. As soon as she began releasing the bandage she realised it was trouble and shouted "Dr Wyndham. we've got a haemorrhage here."

cont.

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By good fortune my surgeon Lt Col Norman Wyndham (the man who performed the amputation of Roden Cutler VC in Syria) was with me in seconds, planted his huge fist on the pressure point in my groin...which didn't thrill me all that much, calmly sent for his weaponry from the theatre and an anaesthetist, and proceeded to ligate (tie off) my femoral artery there and then, where I lay. When I regained consciousness that evening this very fine surgeon was standing by me bed, testing my pulses and, with a smile said "You're still with us son, another minute and we'd have lost you" and went on to patiently explain the whole procedure to me (Well! I'd never heard of things like femoral arteries, haemorrhages and ligations). When I thanked him he replied "All in a day's work, just don't do it gain." I promised.

As he walked away he said "Thank God we didn't get you into the ambulance."

The next few days were the loneliest of my life. Having been separated from my battalion family, it was natural that, as we all shared the experience of being battle casualties, the fellows in that ward had quickly bonded, and now I'd lost them too. One lonely kid and 19 empty beds.

I never did get back to Perth as a patient but became lost in the system.

I spent a few more weeks at Moresby and then several months in the 2/6th AGH at Rocky Creek on the Atherton Tablelands, almost entirely in the company of base wallahs, malingerers and whingeing choccos, you could say that life had taken a turn for the worse.

Excepting for the countless hours of professional attention afforded me by a beautiful young physio-therapist, the standard of care never again reached the same high standard as on the island, but of course the needs weren't the same, and those of us who had been privileged to have been treated by those splendid, dedicated Doctors and attended by those wonderful, selfless angels of mercy had been spoiled rotten.

Perhaps also, a higher power had a major hand in my run of good fortune.

Allan Henderson.



NAME **BROOKS, John Wigram**

Award **M. C.** Reg. No. **WX 5557** Rank **LT** Service **A. M. F.**

Recommended by Governor-General on

17/11/43.

Promulgated in *London Gazette* on

20/1/44.

G. H. File **A. M. F. I/18**

Promulgated in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* on

Citation (G. H. File **AMF I/18** ) **Courage & magnificent leadership** **BUSU RVR 9/10 Sep 1943.**

Insignia received from Londoff **25/4/46.** **PN LONDON. 16/12/46.** G. H. File **I/72.**

Insignia presented by **Registered Post,**

At **-** On **2/8/46.** G. H. File **R/P B/142.**

Address of recipient on presentation date **"Dailack",**

**MT. BARKER.** **WESTERN AUSTRALIA.**

Remarks

Other Awards



# NEW GUINEA

## LAE-MALAHANG DEFENCE AREA SHEET 2

SHOWING ENEMY DEFENCES AS AT 20 JULY

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES GRID  
SOUTHERN NEW GUINEA ZONE

REFER TO THIS MAP AS: LAE-MALAHANG  
DEFENCE AREA 7292 1:10000 SHEET 2



SEE BACK OF SHEET FOR LEGEND.

JULY 1943

## Busu Reunion- Dad and Allan Henderson - Edited Version

Wednesday, 28 May 2014

2:54 PM

### Unexpected Reunion

It was my very great and unexpected pleasure to meet up again with Dick Martin at the luncheon commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Busu River crossing.

Though severely incapacitated Dick managed to make the long journey from Esperance and was accompanied by his lovely wife Chris.

Dick will be remembered for his contributions as a member of John Brookes' 14 Platoon in the 'C' Coy assault on the day following the Busu crossing. Badly wounded in both thighs, he was crawling back towards our bridgehead to send help to other wounded when confronted on a narrow track through the Kunai swamp by a similarly wounded Jap crawling towards his lines.

Dick will assure you that all the Nip needed to do was to keep hard left and they could have pushed past each other with a grudging 'Sayonara' and proceeded on their chosen ways.

Dick had lost his Owen gun and used up all of his hand grenades and here was this clown refusing to give way and making threatening gestures with a grenade. So Dick divested him of the hardware and with bare hands and what little strength he had left he despatched the oriental to his ancestors.

All of which leads one to the certain conclusion that fellas like Dick Martin are good men to have on your side in both war and peace.

Allan Henderson

2/28th Reunion -Alan Henderson

Thursday, 31 May 2007

4:37 PM

Family