



# Plan

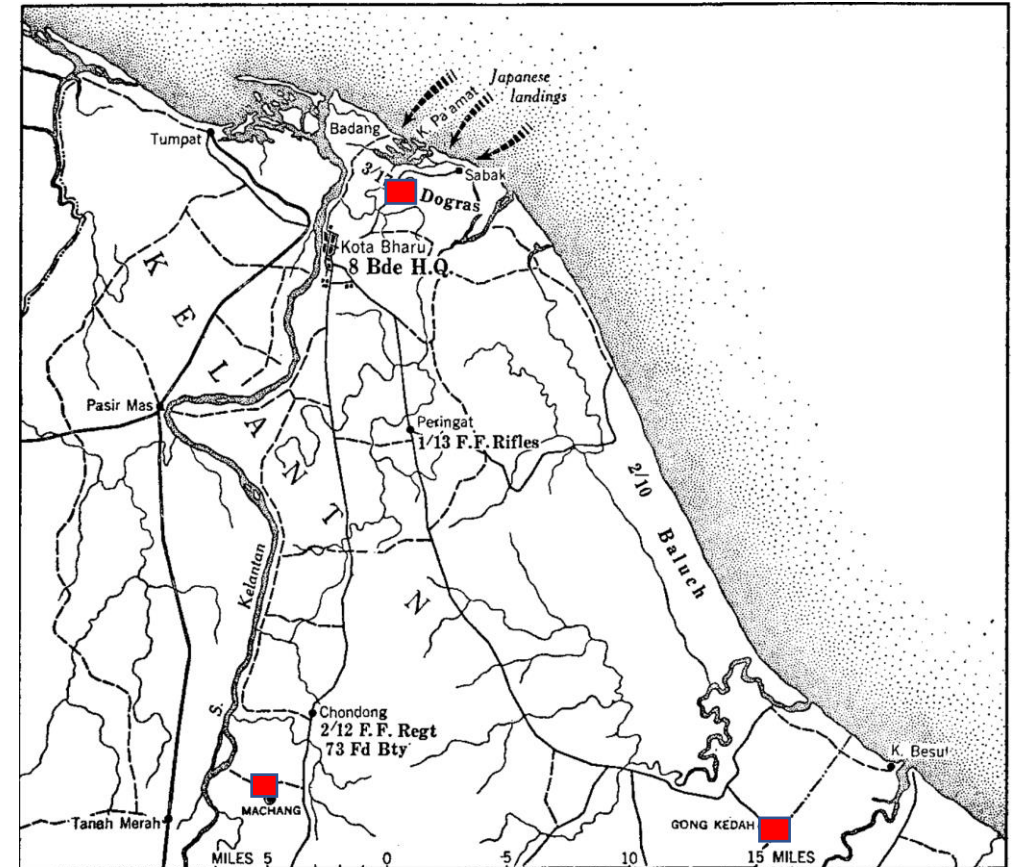
- Continuing the process of going back to look at some of the things, which were not known at the time, which hopefully should help us understand why things happened as they did.
- I will also spend some time following some of the actors in the story, to see whence they came and where they went.
- Last time we looked at some of the Naval Surface Actions.
- This week I want to look at the Land Battle.

# But first

- Another item relating back to the carrier battles:
- Click on the link below to go to youtube footage.
- <https://www.youtube.com/embed/jpt6Bvr2L-s?rel=0&controls=0&showinf%20%5C%20 blank>
- Thanks to Eric for finding that footage.
- On to the Land Battle.

# 8<sup>th</sup> December

- **02.35 Melbourne time in Malaya (00.05 local time)**
- The Indian soldiers manning the coastal defences at Kota Bharu report three small vessels moving slowly down the coast towards Kota Bharu. Kota Bharu airfield inform Air Headquarters and request permission to take reconnaissance photos with flares.
- **03.05 Malaya (00.35)**
- Authority for a reconnaissance flight is received from Air Headquarters.
- The airfield hear gunfire coming from the seafront.
- Brigade headquarters report that enemy warships are shelling the beach defences and that transports can be seen off shore apparently preparing to land troops.
- No 1 squadron RAAF have six Hudsons standing by, bombed-up and ready for orders. The remaining four serviceable aircraft are also hurriedly made ready.
- The Indian brigade, now seek air support in repelling an enemy landing, but the RAF is bound by an order forbidding offensive action even if a convoy is found.



Kota Bharu, 8th December 1941

# 8<sup>th</sup> December

- **04.38 Malaya (02.08)**
- In Singapore Brooke-Popham orders
  - an immediate offensive against the Japanese ships with all No. 1 Squadron's available Hudsons.
  - all the other bomber squadrons in Malaya to take off, at first light, to attack enemy shipping in the Kota Bharu area.
  - A photo-reconnaissance sortie over Singora, to find out if the Japanese have landed in Thai territory.
- The first Hudson takes off, in clearing weather with a rising moon, at 02.08,
  - 2 hours after the boats were first reported and
  - 1 hour 33 minutes after the beach 2 miles from the airfield was first shelled,
  - It is followed at intervals of only two or three minutes by six more.
- The pilots are ordered to make independent low-level attacks on any transports and to report what enemy forces they sighted. Each aircraft carried four 250-lb bombs fused for eleven seconds delay.
- On the seafront only a mile and a half from the Kota Bharu airfield, enemy troops are now coming ashore on the beach, which had been mined and wired, in the face of determined fire from the Indian battalion manning the pill-boxes, which cover the beach.



RAAF Lockheed Hudson

# 8<sup>th</sup> December

- **04.38 Malaya (02.08)**
- The pilot of the first Hudson, Flight Lieutenant Lockwood, making his approach at 2,000 feet, sights three transports and dives to 50 feet to release two bombs. No hits are observed; as his attack draws heavy fire from the ships he takes evasive action then attacks again and releases his two remaining bombs.
- Flight Lieutenant Ramshaw following Lockwood, confirms that his second salvo scores direct hits on the ship.
- From the first seven sorties, one Hudson, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Jones, fails to return. Several other aircraft return holed by anti-aircraft fire which is heavy and accurate.
- Returning crews estimate the Japanese force as 6 warships, probably 3 cruisers and 3 destroyers, 3 transports, and a vessel described as "a large flat ship" which one crew thought might be a small aircraft carrier since no superstructure could be seen.
- In ten more sorties the Hudson crews continue bombing and machine-gunning attacks on the transports and on the barges which were moving to-and-fro between them and the shore. From their second sortie Ramshaw and his crew fail to return, only one man surviving.
- A Hudson piloted by Flight Lieutenant O'Brien, makes a reconnaissance flight about 30 miles to seaward from Kota Bharu and sights a cruiser and three destroyers steaming at high speed in a north-westerly direction.
- O'Brien then returns to Kota Bharu to attack the transports and carries out a mast-height attack on the only remaining transport, about four miles from the beach, which was on fire but apparently still unloading troops. Despite considerable light ack-ack fire he drops his stick of four 250 pounders across its bows, getting a direct hit.
- There is considerable barge activity from the merchant vessel to the beach which is machine-gunned as opportunity offers while returning to the airfield.



# 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941

- **07.30 Kota Bharu (05.00)**
- Davis orders a break in the attack to refuel, rearm and serviceability checks.
- Crews report that one of the enemy ships had blown up and sunk and that at least 24 barges had been destroyed or overturned.
- Four Hudsons have been damaged in these attacks in addition to the two which had failed to return.
- Reconnaissance reports that
  - one large transport is burning about three miles off shore
  - two cruisers, four destroyers and two merchant ships, including the large flat ship, and a small escort vessel, are moving at high speed in a north-westerly direction about 30 miles north-north-east of Kota Bharu.
  - many small power-driven boats are still off shore Kota Bharu.
- The Hudsons have attacked the barges with machine-gun fire doing some damage. They mount two fixed forward firing Browning .303-inch machine guns in the nose and two firing to the side. The side guns were a field modification, they were mounted inside the aircraft protruding through an opening cut in a window giving a restricted field of fire.



Vildebeest Mark 2

The seven Vildebeests from Gong Kedah were ordered off to intercept the retreating ships. In constant rain storms the open cockpit Vildebeests were unable to find any concentration of shipping. A light cruiser was sighted and four aircraft dropped torpedoes but no hits were scored. Three aircraft were damaged in landing accidents on return.

# 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941

- At Kota Bharu the enemy has captured two of the strongpoints in the Dogras' defences and brigade calls for further air support for attacks on small pockets of enemy troops who have begun to penetrate inland. A report is received that enemy barges are being towed up the Kelantan River, and the two R.A.F. Buffalo fighters at Kota Bharu go out to attack them. One of these aircraft is damaged by fire from the ground. On landing back at Kota Bharu the damaged aircraft crashes into a damaged Hudson further damaging both.
- A reconnaissance out to sea finds that all the enemy ships have now retired except the transport which is on fire. A large patch of oil on the sea near the burning ship suggests that a second ship has sunk. Many light craft are closer inshore and concentrations of Japanese troops with horses are seen on the coast near Kota Bharu. Two Hudsons bomb and machine guns these troops, killing many.

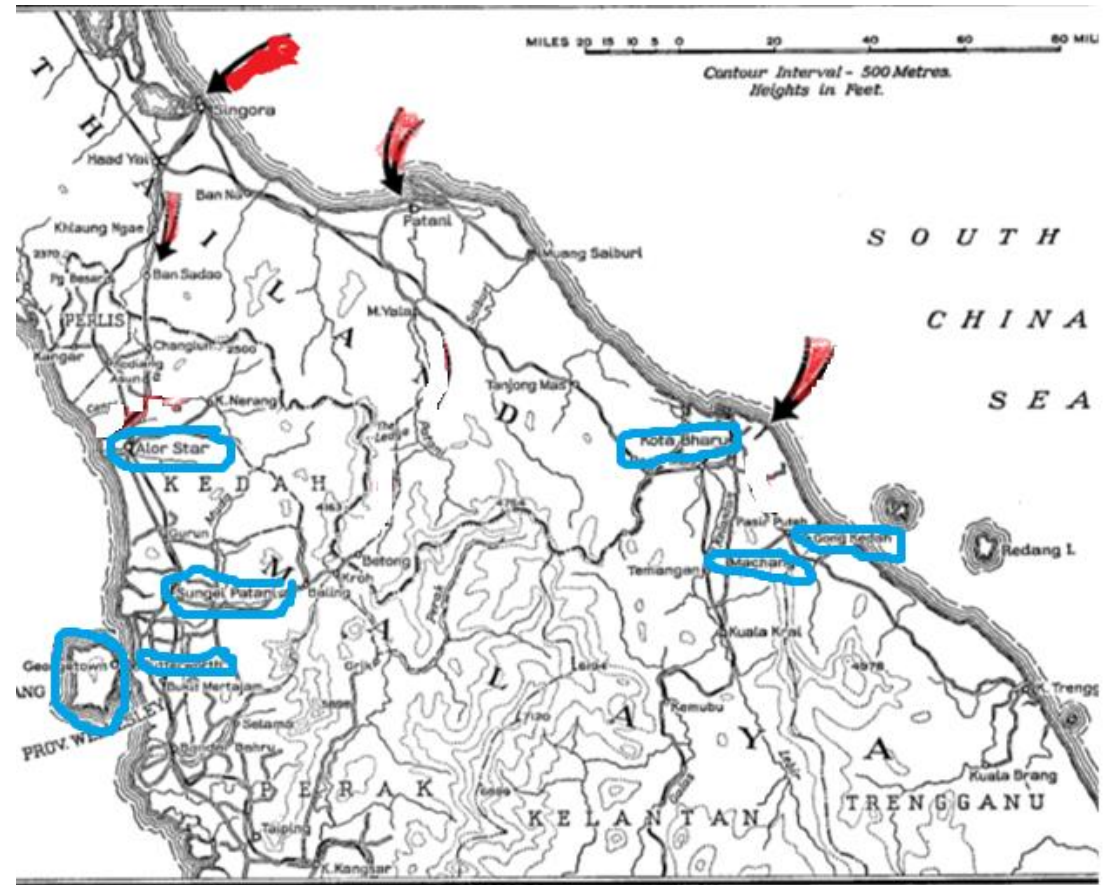


# 8 December Kota Bahru – What we Know Now

- A force of some 5,500 men of the 56th Regiment, detached from the 18th Division, commanded by Major-General Takumi, made for Kota Bharu in three ships with a naval escort, and cast anchor at 10.20 p.m.
- High seas then running caused difficulty in launching the landing craft and maintaining their direction. Confusion occurred about the prearranged landing places, and this was heightened by the British gunfire once the invading force was sighted.
- Under air attack, one transport, the Awagisan Maru, caught fire and was abandoned; a fire started on another but was put out; and the third was damaged.
- The units which first landed lost heavily under fierce fire as they sought to penetrate the wire on the beaches.
- Successive waves of troops "all swarmed together in the one place" according to a Japanese account, and units became mixed with each other. By dawn, however, the survivors were on their way inland.

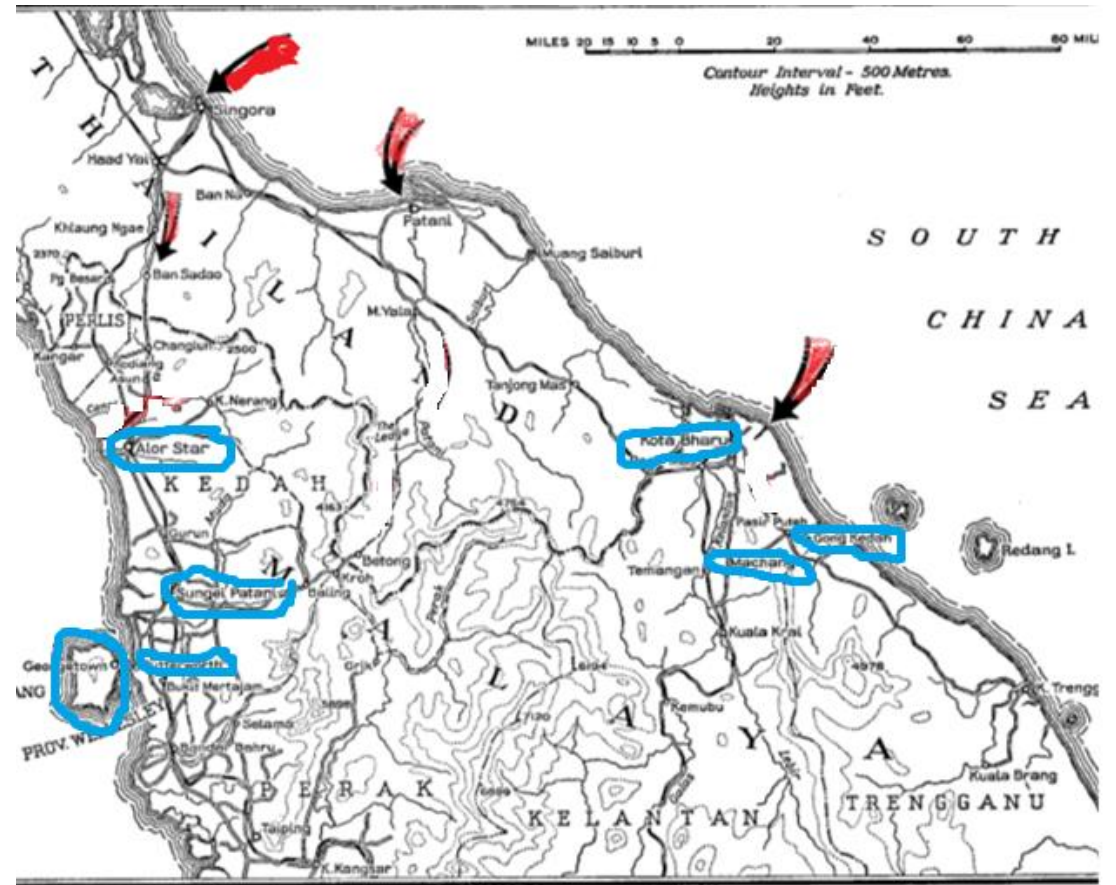
# 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 - Malaya

- 13.15 Malaya (10.45)
- At 10.45, with five buffaloes standing by at Sungei Patani, two dozen single engine bombers are seen approaching at 1,200 feet. The station commander refuses to allow the Buffaloes to scramble. The raiders each drop two sticks of bombs. The petrol dump holding 200,000 gallons goes up in flames and 27 squadron is reduced to four flyable Blenheims. 21 squadron, being reduced to four serviceable Buffaloes, is ordered to withdraw to Butterworth forthwith.
- Before evacuating to Butterworth Flt Lt Kinninmont reconnoitres Singora and the roads south of it for the 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Division. He observes about 40 ships in the harbour and flying boat activity on Singora lake and motor vehicles are moving along the road towards Alor Star. On the return flight he is intercepted by five Japanese fighters but manages to escape without serious damage to the aircraft.
- Japanese fighters make low level strafing attacks on Butterworth and Penang airfields. Four Blenheims of 34 squadron refuelling at Butterworth for the return to Tengah are hit and rendered unserviceable. Butterworth's AA defences consist of two Lewis guns.



# 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 – What we know now

- The 5th Japanese Division was to make the main landings at Singora and Patani in Thailand near Malaya.
- The main body of the 9th Infantry Brigade (11th and 41st Regiments) would then make for west Malaya along the Singora-Alor Star road, and the 42nd Regiment (of the 21st Brigade) along the Patani-Kroh road.
- The 56th Regiment detached from the 18th Division would make a subsidiary landing at Kota Bharu, and push southward along the Malayan east coast.
- Additional flights of the 5th Division, including its fourth infantry regiment, would reach Singora during December.



## 8 Dec – WWKN

- The 143rd Regiment of the 55th Division (XV Japanese Army) would land, concurrently with the first landings in Malaya, north of Singora, to protect the rear of the 5th Division, secure the railway between Bangkok and the frontier with Malaya, and then capture Victoria Point, on the air reinforcement route to Malaya.
- The Guards Division would send a small detachment by sea to Bangkok, capital of Thailand, on the morning of 8th December. There it would await arrival of the rest of the division by land from Indo-China. The Guards would then, moving overland, follow up the advance of 5th Division.



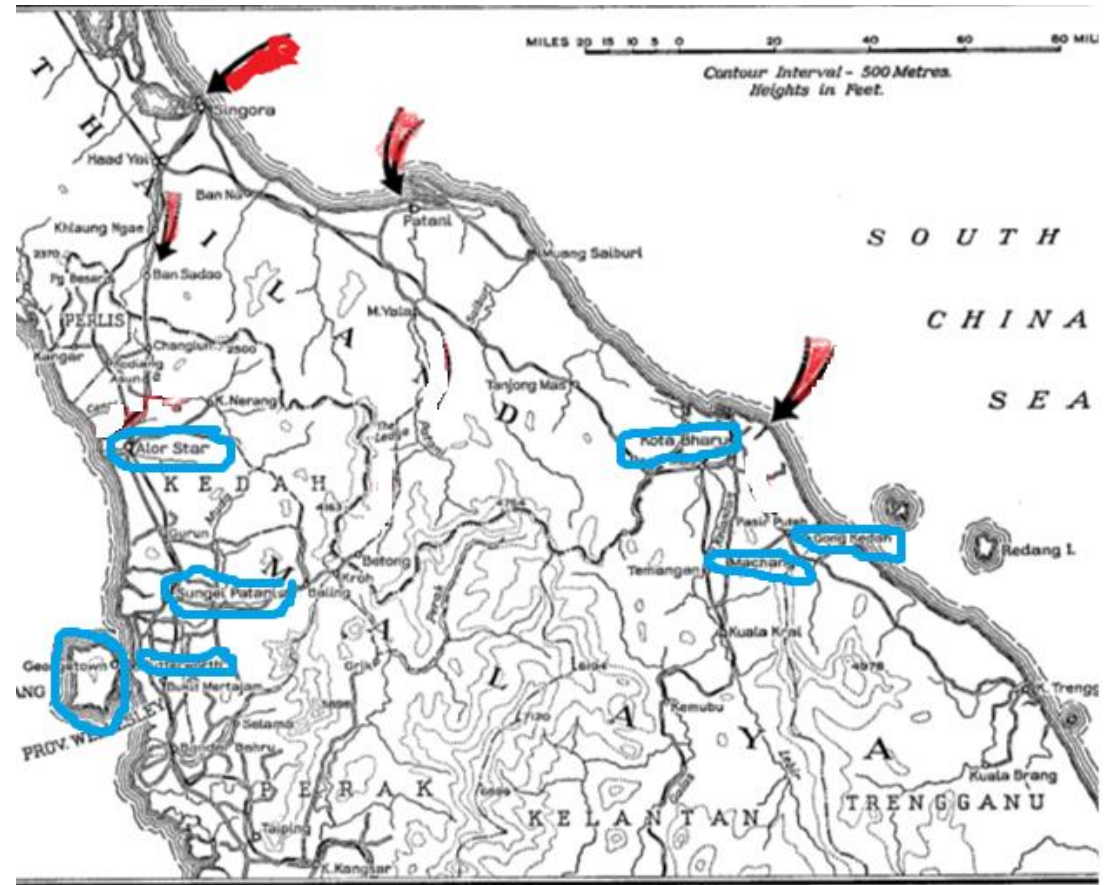
## 8 Dec – WWKN

- The 18th Division, less the 56th Regiment which would have landed at Kota Bharu and the 124th Regiment which would have invaded British Borneo, would land at Singora and Patani early in January, move into northern Malaya and Penang, and prepare to invade Sumatra.
- In convoying the attacking land forces, a feint would be made towards Bangkok to disguise the intention of the move.
- As British airfields were close to or within range of the landing points, and Japanese planes operating from the mainland of Indo-China would be able to operate over these points for only a short while, an air - field was hurriedly constructed on Phuquok Island, off the French Indo - China coast, and within 300 miles of Kota Bharu.
- Even so, single-seater fighters would have very limited combat endurance over the beach heads. It was therefore decided that as soon as possible the planes must be enabled to land and refuel in Thailand near Malaya.



# December 1941 – What we Now Know

- Rough seas hampered landing operations at Singora and Patani, and many landing craft overturned, sank, or ran aground, but by 3.30 a.m. the first landings had been made.
- Some resistance was offered by Thai military and police at Singora but it had been overcome by about midday.
- Approximately 13,500 troops were landed at Singora in the first flight, and 7,550 at Patani.





# 9<sup>th</sup> December

- **Eastern Malaya**

- On the Kota Bharu front Brigadier Key's troops had been withdrawn from the forward positions with difficulty in darkness and heavy rain. Contact with some units was lost, some men were swept away while crossing a flooded river and others were left behind.
- The brigade was in its new position, however, by dawn on 9th December. A dawn attack by the enemy on the right flank of the position was accompanied by heavy fire, and further infiltration followed.
- European women and children and the Sultan of Kelantan and his household having been evacuated from the town, Key decided that the Kota Bharu position was unsuitable for defence and ordered a general withdrawal southward. The brigade pulled back during the night of the 9th to Chondong, on the way to the road and rail junction at Kuala Krai.

- **Western Malaya**

- Krohcol continued to advance towards the "Ledge". Transported by two sections of the 2/3rd Australian Reserve Motor Transport Company, Krohcol had got within five miles of The Ledge when the leading company, advancing on foot, came under fire.
- Japanese tanks then appeared, followed by truck-loads of troops, and then more tanks. One of the Punjab companies was trapped, and another temporarily cut off; but the Indians fought on.
- The 5/14th Punjab and the 10th Mountain Battery, arrived meanwhile at Kroh and took up a supporting position north of Betong.



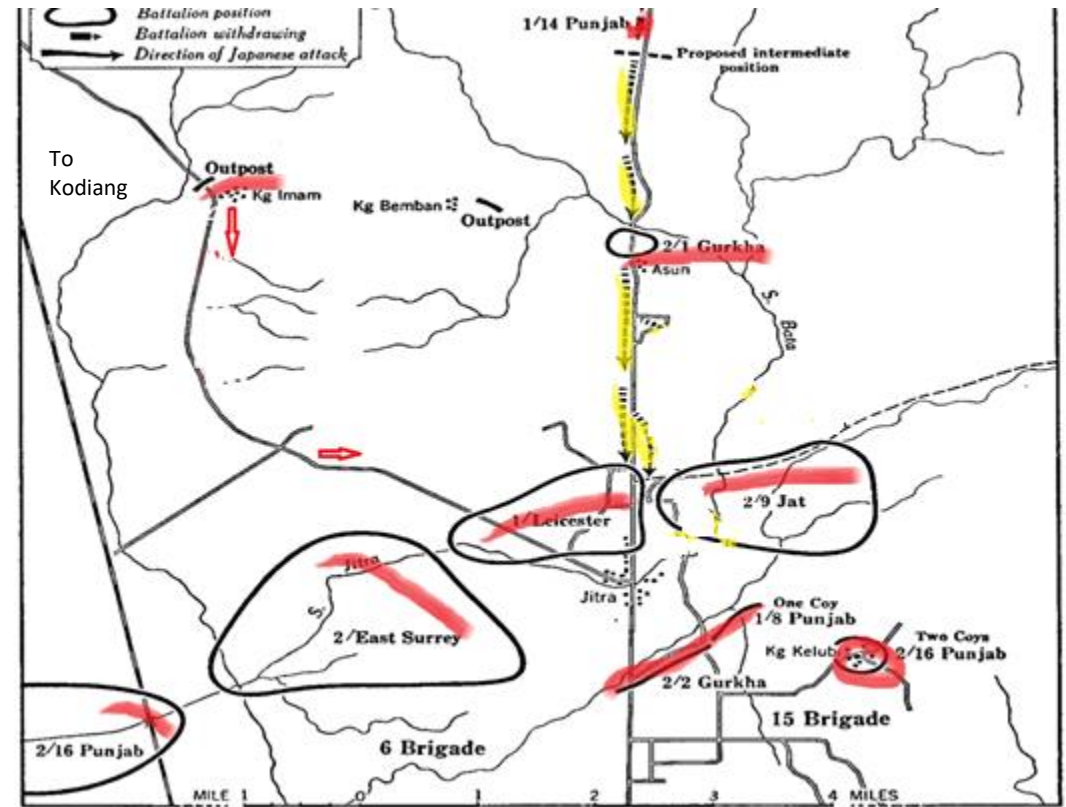
Japanese light tank

# 10<sup>th</sup> December

- **Western Malaya**
- **Jitra Line**
- Confronted by a Japanese advance-guard south of the frontier early on 10th December, the outposts of the 11<sup>th</sup> Indian division gradually withdrew, seeking to delay the enemy as it did so. The division commander told the Brigade Commander that, to gain time for preparation of the main positions, he must hold the approach to Jitra till 12th December, and assigned reinforcements to assist him. The forward troops were concentrated round Changlun and Asun.
- The foremost troops on the Koding road were withdrawn to Koding, carrying out demolitions along the railway as they went.
  - This move amounted to evacuation of the British forces from Perlis. The Sultan of Perlis protested that it constituted a violation of Britain's treaty with the State.
- **Air**
- The effect of the smoke and the sound of explosions from demolitions at Alor Star airfield on the morale of troops forward of the airfield was so serious that orders were given that in future petrol and oil were to be allowed to run to waste rather than be fired when airfields had to be evacuated.
- During the withdrawals there was some defective discipline amongst the ground parties of 21 RAAF and 27 RAF squadrons.
- Penang airfield was raided again.
- A.H.Q. had given up all hope of using Kuantan airfield again. Orders came through to save as much as possible and get out as soon as possible.

# 11<sup>th</sup> December - Malaya

- **West**
- **Jitra Line**
- During the morning of 11th December, the Japanese pressed the 1/14th Punjabs where they had concentrated at Changlun. Two anti-tank guns were lost, and a further withdrawal was ordered to a position about two miles north of Asun.
- This withdrawal was in progress when, about 4.30 p.m., in heavy rain, Japanese medium tanks, followed by motorised infantry, attacked the rear of the column. In the surprise and confusion, the Japanese broke through, overran two anti-tank and two mountain guns, and approached the bridge in front of the Asun position held by the 2/1st Gurkhas. The bridge demolition charge failed to go off, but the leading tank was stopped by fire from anti-tank rifles, and blocked the road, halting the tank advance.
- Japanese infantry, however, attacked the Gurkhas in front and from the flanks, cleared the road and allowed the tanks to resume their advance. They broke through the outpost position, overwhelmed most of the forward troops and isolated the battalion headquarters. Only small parties succeeded in fighting their way out.
- By 8.30 p.m. the tanks had overrun a forward patrol of the 1/Leicesters, but once more the leading tanks were disabled, forming a temporary road block. However, they continued firing while the Leicesters hastily constructed a further obstacle of tree trunks, wire, and mines.
- On the Kodiang road, withdrawal was continued on 11th December. A premature bridge demolition resulted in the trucks and carriers of the outpost troops, four mountain guns, and seven anti-tank guns being left behind although there had been no fighting.



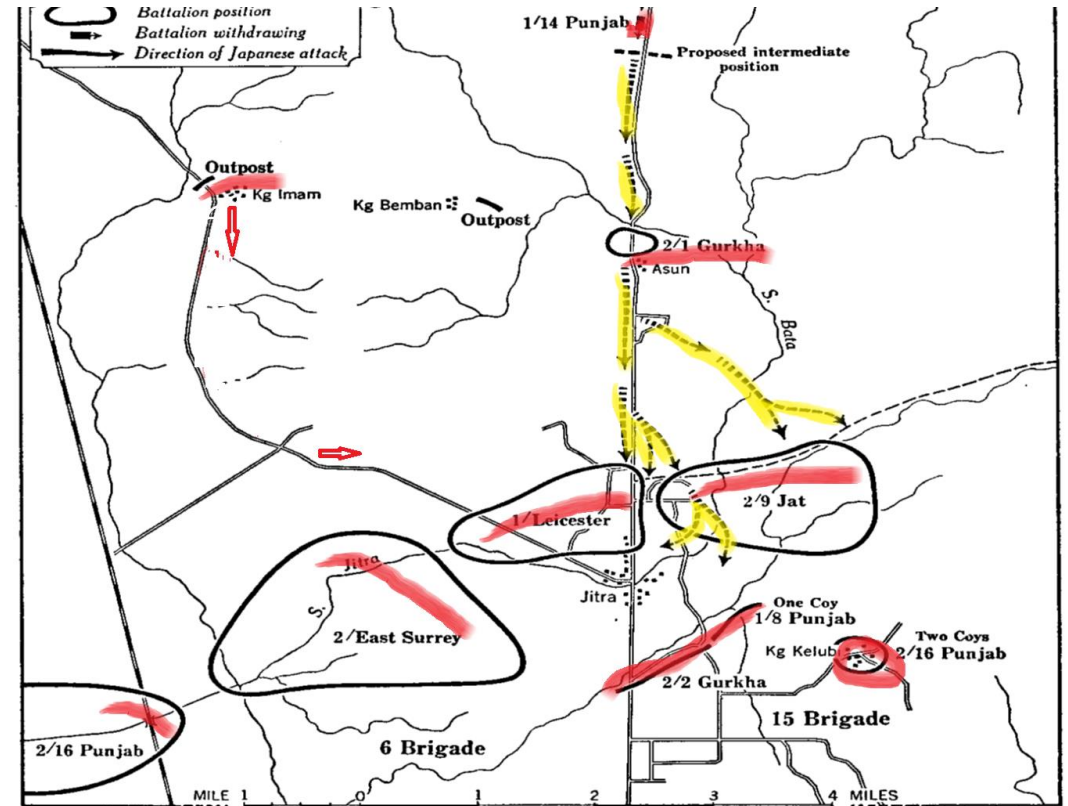
In the absence of Garrett, who was missing, the 15th Brigade was placed at this stage under the command of Carpendale; the 2/2nd Gurkhas from the 28th Brigade were ordered to reinforce the 15th Brigade.

# 11<sup>th</sup> December

- **Krohcol**
- the Japanese increased their pressure towards Kroh. Successive attacks in strength during the afternoon of 11th December were repulsed by the 3/16th Punjab in their position near The Ledge, but at the cost of heavy casualties, and outflanking movements were threatening the position. Colonel Moorhead, who estimated that his force was opposed by three battalions was given permission to retire if necessary. Consequently he arranged for the 3/16th to withdraw through the 5/14th Punjab early on 12th December.
- **Jitra**
- Murray-Lyon (11 Indian division), concerned at the speed at which the threat to his line of communication from the road through Kroh was developing, at what seemed to him to be a serious threat to his right flank at Jitra, and the fact that his reserve had been committed and his men were tired, now asked for permission to withdraw from Jitra to Gurun, 30 miles southward. General Heath was on the train to Singapore so this request went straight to Percival. He thought such a withdrawal would demoralise both the troops and the civil population, and would prejudice chances of denying west coast airfields to the enemy. Percival ordered that the battle for north-west Malaya should be fought out in the Jitra position.
- **Air**
- On 11th December, after daily air raids on Penang airfield from 8th December, Georgetown was raided. The main town on Penang Island and shipping in its harbour, were bombed and machine-gunned by more than 40 bombers escorted by fighters. After three days of attacks on the airfield which caused no damage to the town the inhabitants saw no need to take cover. In the absence of anti-aircraft defences and defending fighter aircraft, about 2,000 casualties were inflicted. Civilian services broke down and dead civilians were left lying in the streets.
- By 11th December the enemy air forces, having gained superiority in the air over northern Malaya, began to attack the defending land forces.
- The remainder of No 21 Sqn moved by road and rail, arriving at their new base, Ipoh, at 3.30 a.m. and camped by the roadside because no quarters could be found for them at the time.
- 21 squadron was issued 16 replacement Buffaloes and allocated a proportion of new pilots. That night a group of the unit's pilots left by train for Singapore to bring back these aircraft.

# 12<sup>th</sup> December - Malaya

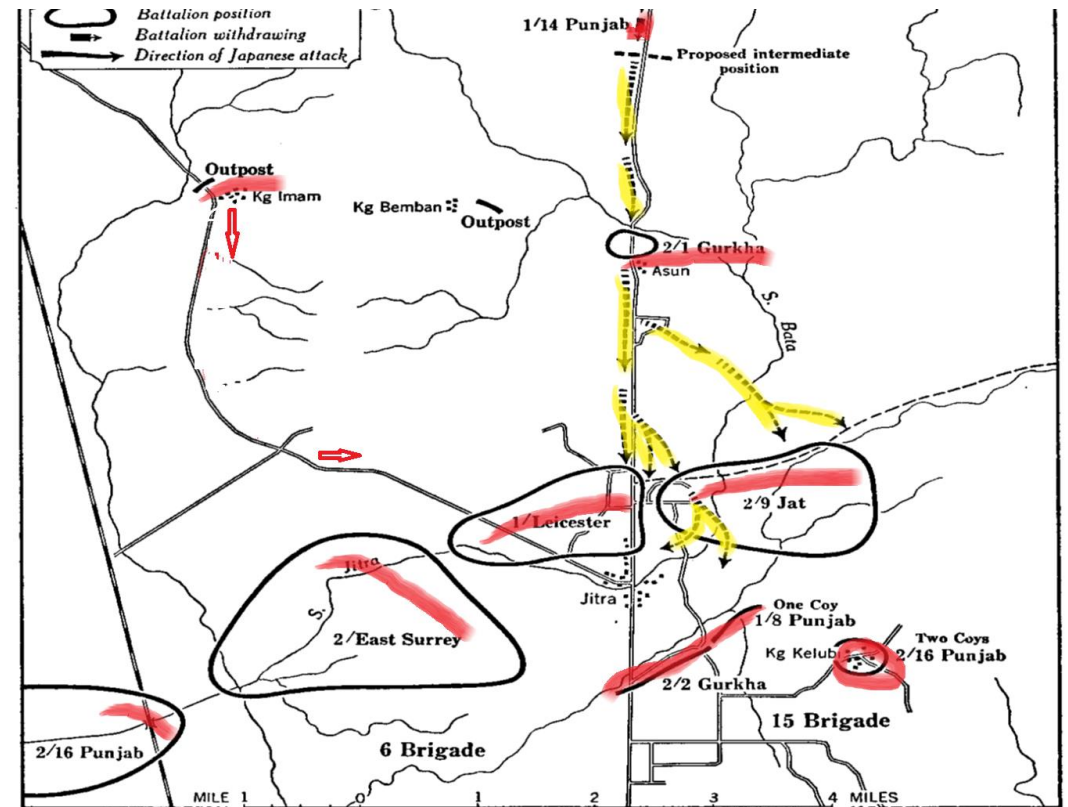
- **Jitra**
- On the main road before dawn on 12th December the Japanese succeeded in reaching the right forward company of the Leicesters. During three hours of sharp fighting, the Leicesters held the Japanese at bay in this area, but the enemy managed to penetrate some distance between the two battalions.
- The Japanese then attacked again east of the road. The left forward company of the Jats was overwhelmed, and a wedge was driven between the Jat and the Leicester battalions. Soon the Japanese were in contact with 2/2nd Gurkhas and were attacking the Leicesters' right flank.
- At this stage the Japanese were repulsed by the carrier platoon (sixteen Bren guns in tracked vehicles) of the 2/East Surrey who had been sent from 6th Brigade, and the Gurkhas and Leicesters stood their ground.
- Parties which had been cut off in earlier fighting (among them Brigadier Garrett) were now coming in, and being used as reinforcements.





# 12<sup>th</sup> December - Malaya

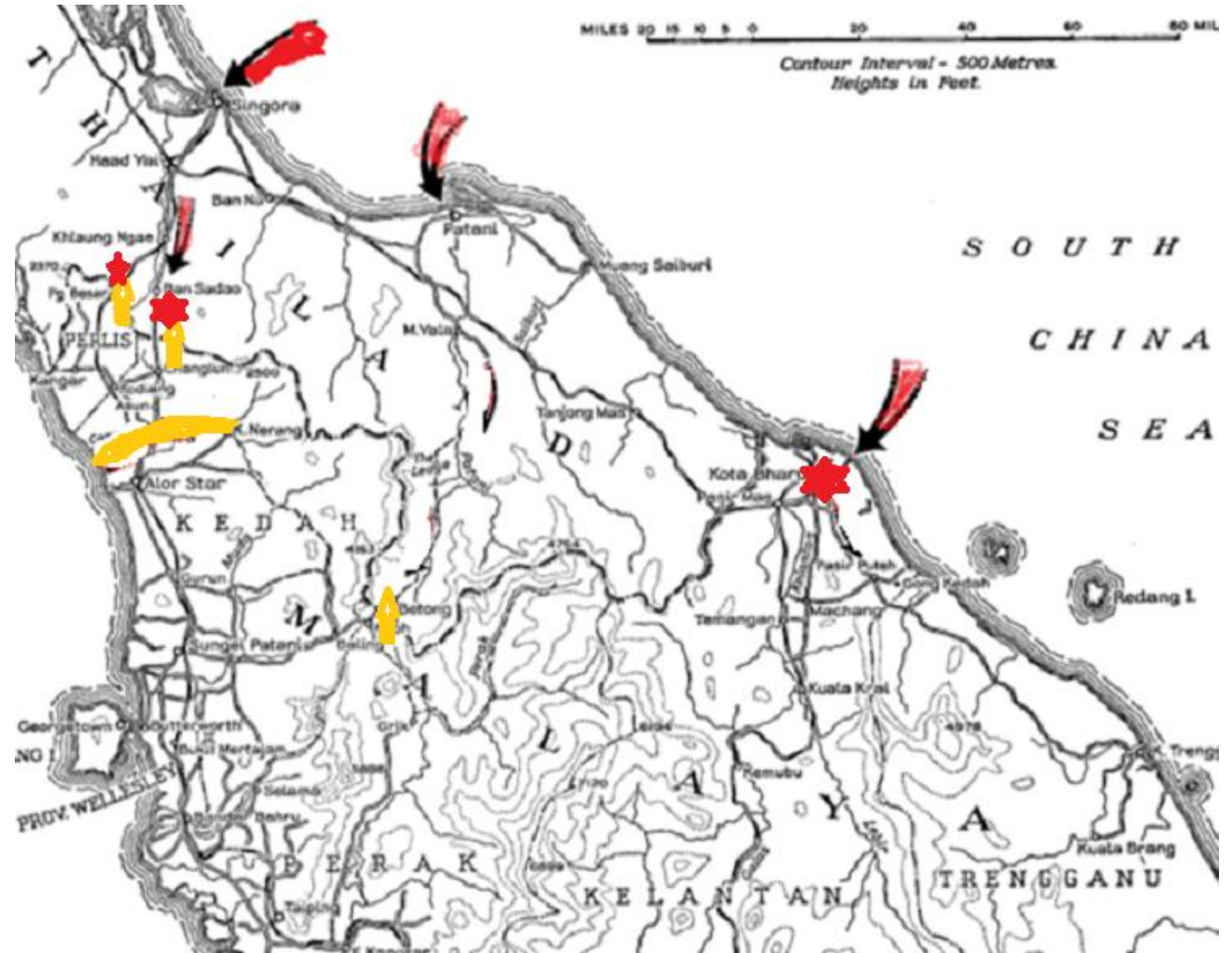
- **Jitra**
- A gap of about one and a half miles, between the Leicesters and the Gurkhas, had become a serious danger. Murray-Lyon gave orders that the Leicesters should be moved to close the gap, and that the Jats should be withdrawn.
- These orders were misconstrued, and did not reach the right forward company of the Jats. Attacked while they were taking up new positions, the Leicesters lost heavily, and the movement became badly confused. The situation in the Jat sector rapidly deteriorated, and soon troops and transport were streaming in disorder southward over the bridge.
- Murray-Lyon ordered withdrawals from the 6th Brigade sector, sought to restore order, and at 7.30 p.m. again asked for permission to withdraw to Gurun.
- Heath, after consultation with Percival, replied that the task of the 11th Division was to fight for the security of north Kedah; that he estimated it was opposed by one Japanese division at most; and that the best solution seemed to be to halt the advance of the enemy tanks on a good obstacle and dispose the forces of the 11<sup>th</sup> Division so as to obtain considerable depth, and scope for its artillery.
- Murray-Lyon was accordingly given discretion to withdraw.





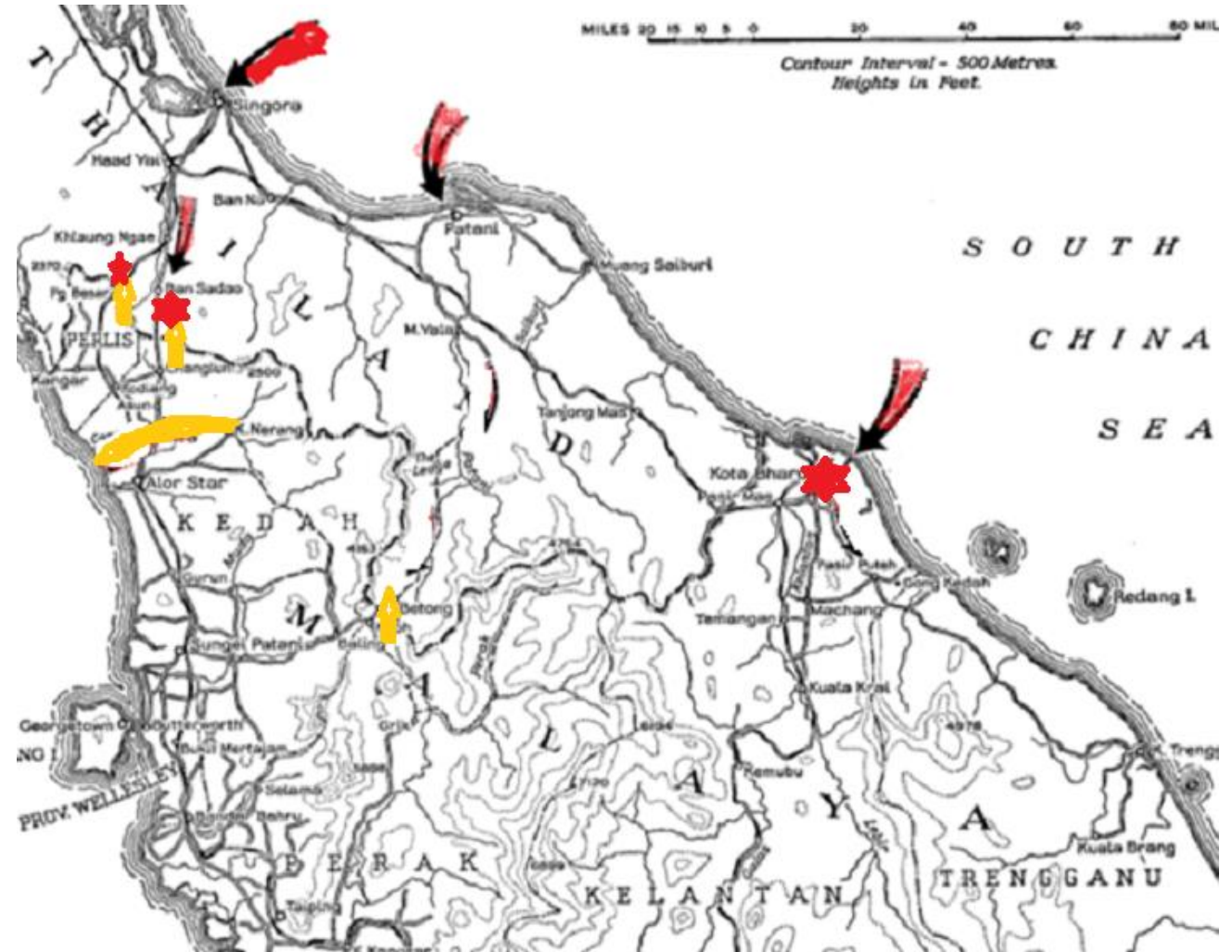
# 12 Dec - WWNK

- The commander of the Japanese 9th Infantry Brigade (General Kawamura) had gone forward at noon on 12th December and ordered the 41st Infantry Regiment to take over the task of advance-guard, and at night to attack the eastern side of the main road near Jitra while 11th Infantry Regiment attacked the western side.
- The advance-guard of the 5th Division comprising the 5th Reconnaissance Regiment; a mountain artillery company; a tank company; an engineer platoon; and the II/41st Battalion had lead the advance from Singora to Jitra. Now they again attacked in battalion strength east of the road, before Kawamura's orders could be put into effect.



# 12 Dec - WWNK

- Under the impetus of the attack, the left forward company of the Jats was overwhelmed, and a wedge was driven between the Jat and the Leicester battalions. Soon the Japanese battalion was in contact with 2/2nd Gurkhas holding the south bank of the Sungei Bata east of the main road bridge and was attacking the Leicesters' right flank.
- A difficult, disorganised, and costly withdrawal from Jitra followed.
- The Japanese losses at Jitra were 27 killed and 83 wounded.
- Hastening from Patani towards Kroh was the Japanese 42nd Infantry Regiment with two companies of light tanks and a battery of field artillery.



# 12 Dec - WWNK

- The Official history says:
- “The fact ... that merely an advance - guard of the Japanese 5th Division had dislodged the 11th Division from Jitra, emphasises the advantage gained by the hitherto underrated enemy from his swift, dynamic development of the offensive in contrast to a hesitant deployment of the defending forces.
- Adequate air reconnaissance could have corrected the misleading impression which Murray-Lyon obtained of the immediate danger to the position. Even a few tanks, and adequate employment of anti-tank guns, might have countered the disastrous physical and psychological effect which the enemy tanks achieved.
- The long Jitra line had been manned at the expense of defence in depth on the road, which obviously, as they were advancing with tanks and mechanical transport, the Japanese would use. Their troops were thus able to exploit this weakness, and the inexperience in battle of most of those who opposed them.
- Having been poised for Operation MATADOR, cancelled only after fatal delay, the 11th Division was caught on the wrong foot in its hastily assumed static defence role while the Japanese imposed a war of movement.”

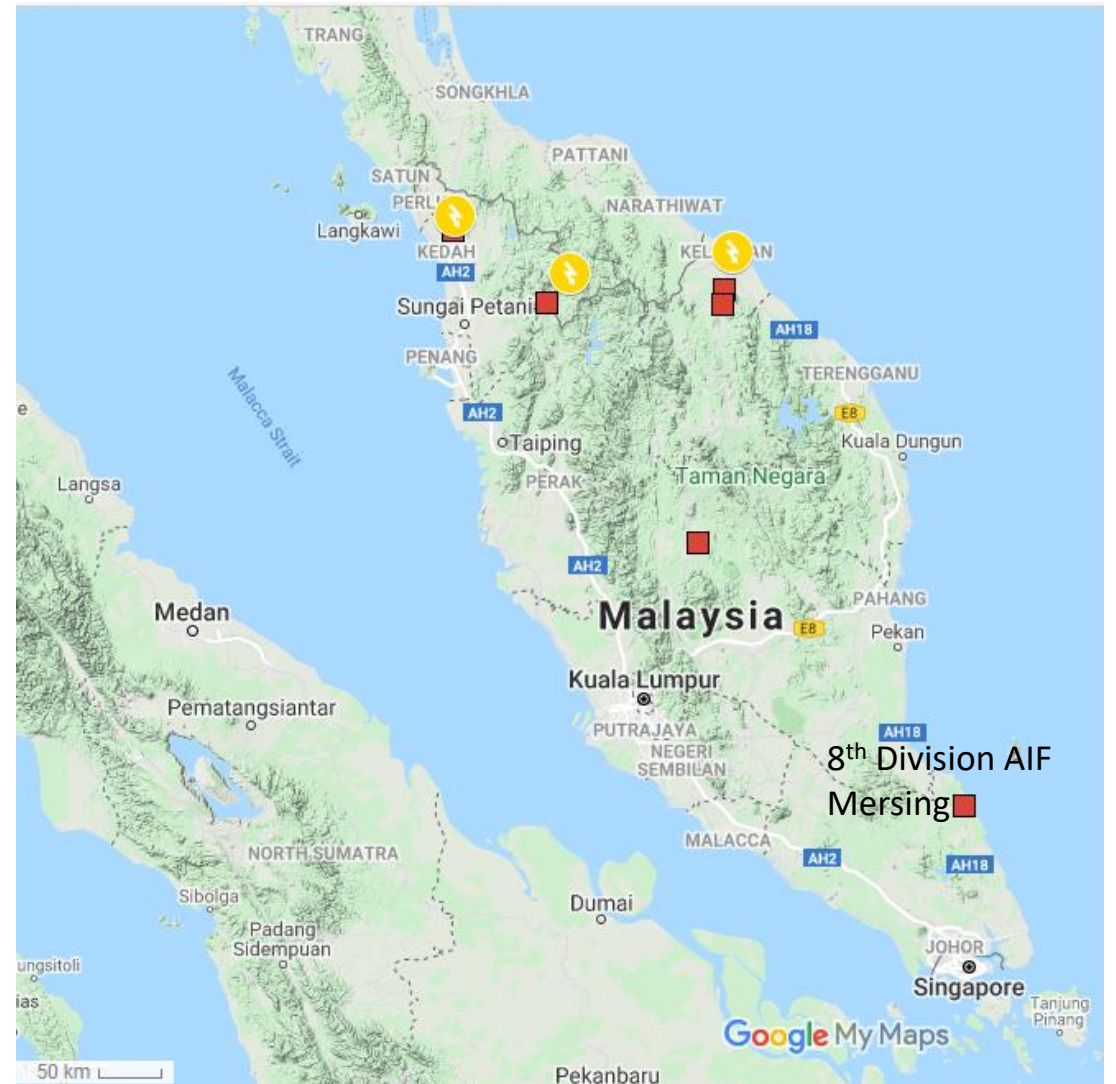
# 12 Dec - WWNK

- “Being in Singapore when the unforeseen crisis occurred, Heath had not been able to exercise on the spot at Jitra his authority and perspective as corps commander in the direction of the battle. Premature use of reserve units robbed Murray-Lyon of means of influencing it at the critical stage.
- Both the Japanese mechanised columns, confined to the roads, would have been vulnerable to air attack had British aircraft been employed for the purpose; but almost in a matter of hours the Japanese had gained command of the air.
- Now, too, they had command of the seas, enabling them to land troops at will in front, on the flanks, or to the rear of the British land forces; and of the three divisions deployed for the defence of the mainland, one had already been dislodged and largely disintegrated.
- No prospect existed of substantial reinforcement from overseas until at least the following month. Consequently the policy adopted was to resist the enemy as fully as circumstances permitted, but as far as possible to avoid forces being cut off and destroyed in detail.”



# December Malaya

- While the 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Division in the west and the 9<sup>th</sup> Indian Division in the east fought the Japanese close to the Thai frontier the 8<sup>th</sup> Division AIF was stationed at Mersing to defend against a possible Japanese landing on the east coast closer to Singapore.
- A fortress garrison was defending Singapore against a direct attack.



# 25<sup>th</sup> December

- **Malaya**

- Captain Spencer Chapman crossed the Perak on Christmas Day intending to meet Roseforce at a rendezvous and guide it to suitable targets. The rendezvous failed, but he lay by a roadside and watched the enemy. He saw:
- “hundreds and hundreds of them, pouring eastwards towards the Perak River. The majority of them were on bicycles in parties of forty or fifty, riding three or four abreast and talking and laughing just as if they were going to a football match. Indeed, some of them were actually wearing football jerseys; they seemed to have no standard uniform or equipment and were travelling as light as they possibly could. Some wore green, others grey, khaki or even dirty white. The majority had trousers hanging loose and enclosed in high boots or puttees; some had tight breeches and others shorts and rubber boots or gym shoes. ...
- Their equipment and armament were equally varied and were slung over themselves and their bicycles with no apparent method. . . . The general impression was one of extraordinary determination: they had been ordered to go to the bridgehead, and in their thousands they were going, though their equipment was second-rate and motley and much of it had obviously been commandeered in Malaya. This was certainly true of their means of transport, for we saw several parties of soldiers on foot who were systematically searching the roadside kampongs for bicycles and most of the cars and lorries bore local number plates. . . .”
- “All this was in very marked contrast to our own front-line soldiers, who were at this time equipped like Christmas trees with heavy boots, web equipment, packs, haversacks, water-bottles, blankets, ground-sheets, and even great-coats and respirators, so that they could hardly walk, much less fight.”



Chapman had trained Australian forces in guerrilla warfare and organised parties to stay behind in Japanese occupied areas.



# 7<sup>th</sup> January – Slim River

- A further infantry attack occurred soon after midnight on the 6th-7th along both the road and the railway; then,
  - after a heavy barrage of mortar and artillery fire, and in clear moonlight, tanks suddenly appeared on the road. These were part of a mechanised column with infantry interspersed between the armour.
  - Under covering fire, the infantry soon disposed of the first road-block in its path; the forward company of Hyderabad's was overrun; and with guns blazing the column charged on.
  - Other Japanese troops renewed the pressure along the railway, and some of the tanks used an abandoned and overgrown section of old road in a flanking manoeuvre, with the result that rapid progress was made in this thrust also.
  - The column was checked only when the leading tank entered a mined section of the road in front of the forward company of the 5/2nd Punjab near Milestone 61. Fierce fighting ensued, but here the first of two more disused deviations, which it had been intended to use for transport when the time came for the battalion to withdraw, enabled the enemy to move to the flank and rear.
  - Again overrunning the position, the Japanese column advanced until it came upon more mines, in front of the reserve company of the 5/2nd Punjab. Furious fighting at this point lasted for an hour, but by exploiting the third loop section the Japanese achieved the same result as before.
  - The suddenness of the penetration so disorganised communications that it was not until 6.30 a.m., when the position had been lost, that a dispatch rider delivered to General Paris' headquarters at Tanjong Malim his first message from the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade.
  - Even this contained only a vague reference to "some sort of break-through", for the information received by Stewart had lagged behind the night's swiftly-moving events.
- About this time (06.30) four enemy medium tanks reached the first of two road-blocks hurriedly erected by the Argylls. The blocks, and such resistance as the battalion, lacking anti-tank guns, was able to offer to the tanks, were also overcome, and an attempt to destroy the bridge at Trolak failed.

# 7<sup>th</sup> January - Slim River

- The Argyll companies on the railway and the estate road held out until they were surrounded, and then tried to fight their way out, all but about a hundred of them being lost.
- At 7.30 a.m. the tanks reached the 5/14th Punjab moving up in column of companies to occupy their check position. Caught by surprise, the Punjabis were dispersed and a troop of anti-tank guns sent from the 28th Brigade to assist them in the position they were to occupy was overrun before it could fire a shot.
- Paris had ordered Selby to deploy the 28th Brigade in the positions assigned to it, and Selby had issued his orders at 7 a.m.
  - The 2/9<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas were occupying positions near Kampong Slim when, about 8 a.m., the leading Japanese tanks roared past, and
  - caught the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles moving in column of route to Cluny Estate. Thrown into confusion, the battalion dispersed.
  - The tanks next paused briefly to fire on two batteries of the 137th Field Regiment parked beside the road, and reached the Slim River bridge about 8.30 a.m.
  - An anti-aircraft battery brought two Bofors guns to bear on them at 100 yards' range, but the shells bounced off the tanks, while they poured fire into the gun crews.
  - Before the bridge could be destroyed, the tanks crossed it and continued their triumphant course.
- Two miles south of the bridge they met the 155<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment moving up to support the 28th Brigade. There, after the regiment's headquarters had been overrun, and six hours after the column had commenced its thrust, they were stopped. Although under heavy fire, a howitzer detachment got a 4.5-inch howitzer into action. With their leading tank disabled, the Japanese thereafter confined themselves to tank patrols, and during the afternoon withdrew to the bridge.

# 8<sup>th</sup> January - Slim River

- Next day—8th January—
  - the strength of the 12th Brigade was fourteen officers and 409 men and
  - the 28th Brigade was reduced to only 750 men.
  - The guns and equipment of two field batteries and two troops of antitank guns, and
  - all the transport of the two brigades, had been lost.
- When Wavell visited the III Corps on 8th January, and assessed its condition after the Battle of Slim River, he promptly decided that it must be withdrawn to Johore for rest and reorganisation before again facing any major encounter with the enemy.
- He told Heath of this decision, and said that, though he should cover Kuala Lumpur as long as possible, he should not await a full-scale enemy attack.



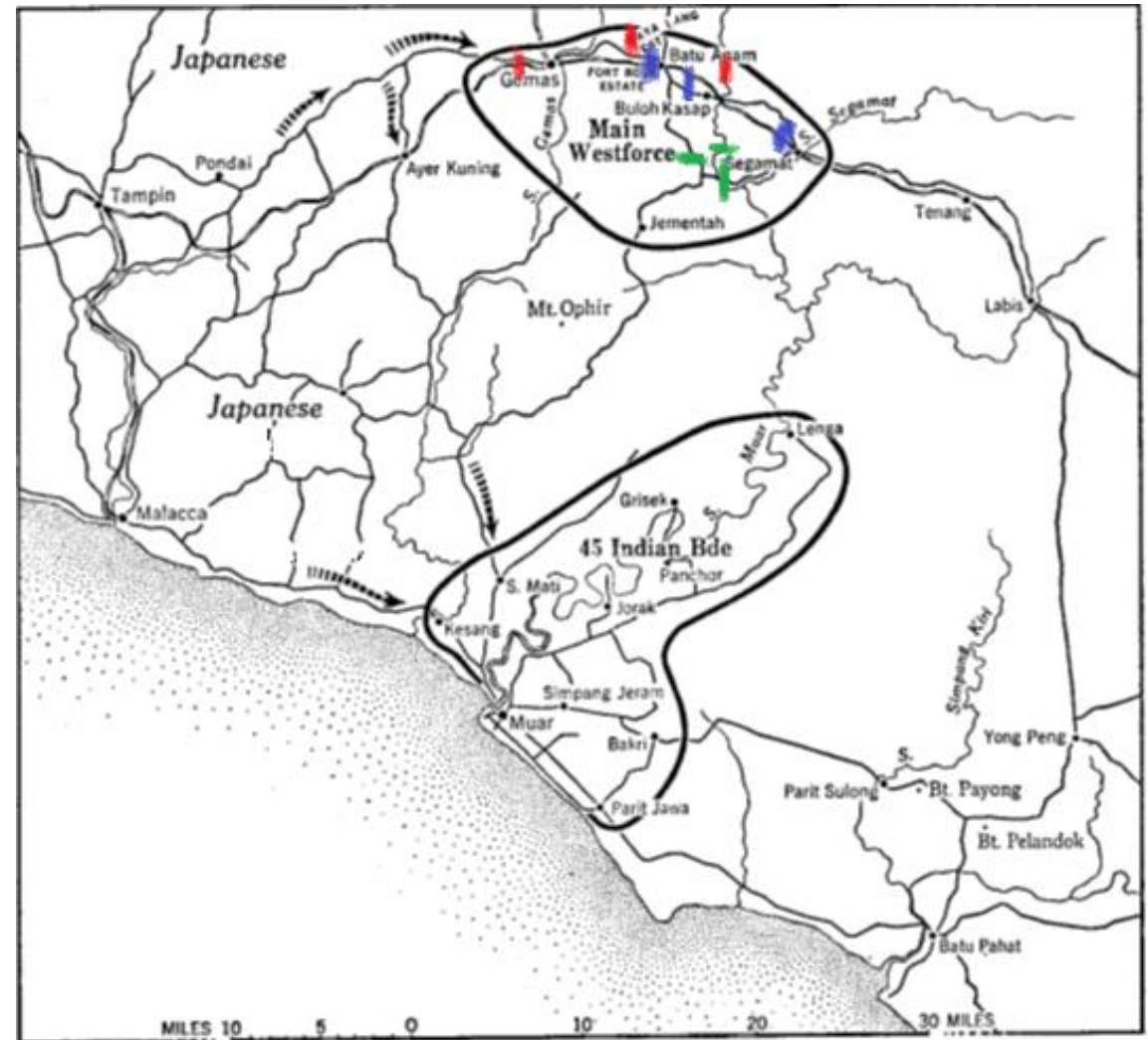
General Wavell inspecting Indian troops in Singapore  
8<sup>th</sup> January 1942

# 7<sup>th</sup> January – Malaya – What we know now

- The official history says:
- Once again, the impetus of the enemy had thrown the machinery of control out of gear, and the defenders off balance. The Japanese had repeated their success at Jitra, and by similar means.
- It was discovered later that the battle (Slim River, 7th January) was won by the Japanese 42nd Infantry Regiment, aided by a tank battalion and part of an artillery regiment. The spearhead of the attack comprised one tank company, an infantry battalion in carriers and lorries, and some engineers.
- The tactics employed by the Japanese from the commencement of their invasion of Malaya—in particular their enveloping type of attack and the flexibility and momentum of their movements—had been consistent. They could hardly have been cause for surprise had the substance of Intelligence reports on the subject been adequately circulated and sufficiently digested by commanders; yet the enemy had employed them with unflinching success.
- It is now known that the commander of the 5th Japanese Division, pursuant of the fundamental principle of the Japanese Army in the campaign that the British forces must be given no respite, had ordered his frontline units to attack without losing time in arranging liaison and cooperation with each other, and to disjoint the British chain of orders as much as possible .

# 13<sup>th</sup> January

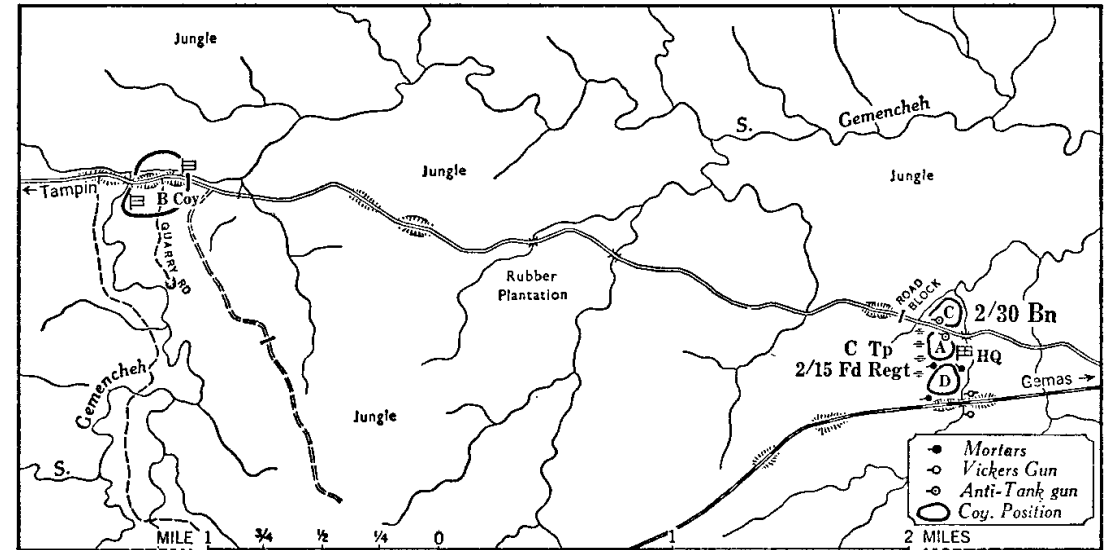
- The 27th Brigade was disposed on 13th January in the Segamat sector,
- the foremost position, on the trunk road three miles west of Gemas, was occupied by the 2/30th Australian Battalion (Lieut-Colonel Galleghan). The role of the battalion was to act as a shock-absorber at the first contact with the enemy, inflict as many casualties as possible, and hold its ground for at least 24 hours before falling back on the main positions.
- The 2/26th Battalion (Lieut-Colonel Boyes) was on the Paya Lang Estate, north of the trunk road, and between Gemas and Batu Anam.
- Behind the 2/26<sup>th</sup> was the 2/29th Battalion (Lieut-Colonel Robertson), at Buloh Kasap.
- The (9<sup>th</sup> Indian div) dispositions were:
- 8th Indian Brigade: 1/13th Frontier Force Rifles astride the road west of Batu Anam; 2/10th Baluch between Batu Anam and Buloh Kasap; 3/17th Dogras, Segamat.
- 22nd Indian Brigade: 5/11<sup>th</sup> Sikhs near bridge over Sungei Muar four miles west of Segamat on the road to Jementah; 2/18th Garhwals about the junction of the roads Batu Anam to Jementah and Segamat to Jementah; 2/12th Frontier Force Regiment, between the Garhwals and the Sikhs.



The Westforce front, 14th January 1942

# 14<sup>th</sup> January – The Ambush at Gemas

- Galleghan, inspecting the position soon after first light on the 14th, also noticed the signal wire and gave instructions for its concealment.
- Shortly before 4 p.m., a few Japanese on bicycles rounded the bend near the Gemencheh bridge. Soon a column of blithely chattering Japanese push cyclists, riding five or six abreast, was streaming over the bridge. They resembled a picnic party rather than part of an advancing army, except that they carried arms.
- Reporting by telephone to battalion headquarters that the cyclists were moving through, Duffy found that the voice at the other end of the line reached him only faintly.
- Sounds along the road forward of his position suggested that motor transport, with perhaps the main body of the enemy convoy, was following. He therefore let from 200 to 300 of the cyclists pass, to be dealt with by troops in the rear.
- As it happened, only three motor cyclists appeared, followed by several hundred more cyclists. When these were tightly packed into the ambush, and on the bridge, and it seemed to Duffy that the head of the column would have reached the Quarry road position, he gave the order for the bridge to be blown.
- The charge hurled timber, bicycles and bodies skyward.



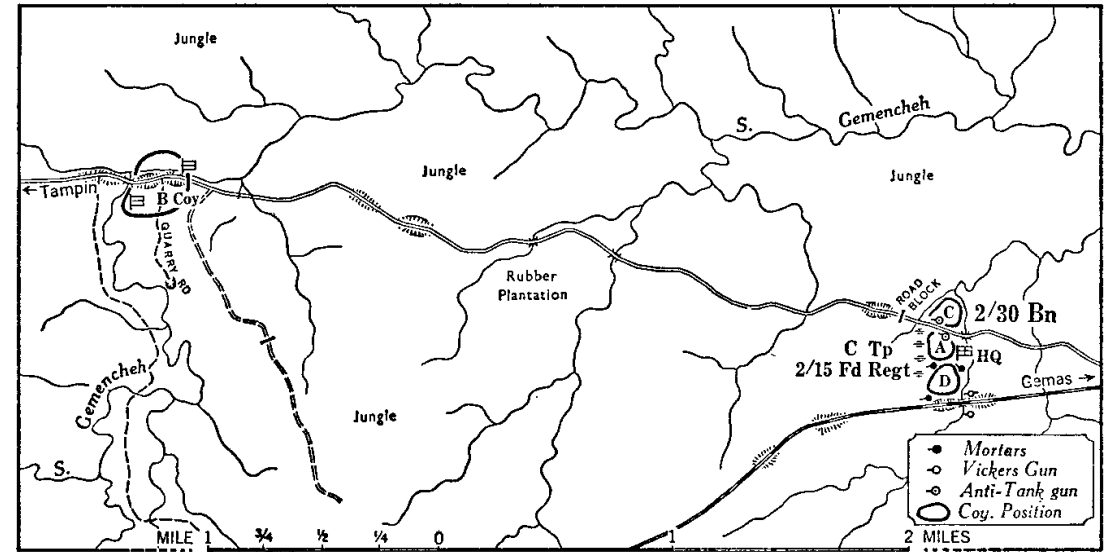
Duffy's three platoons hurled grenades among the enemy and swept them with fire from Bren guns, Tommy guns and rifles.

The din was so great that when Duffy ordered artillery fire the artillery forward observation officer thought his battery's guns were firing.



# 14<sup>th</sup> January - Gemas

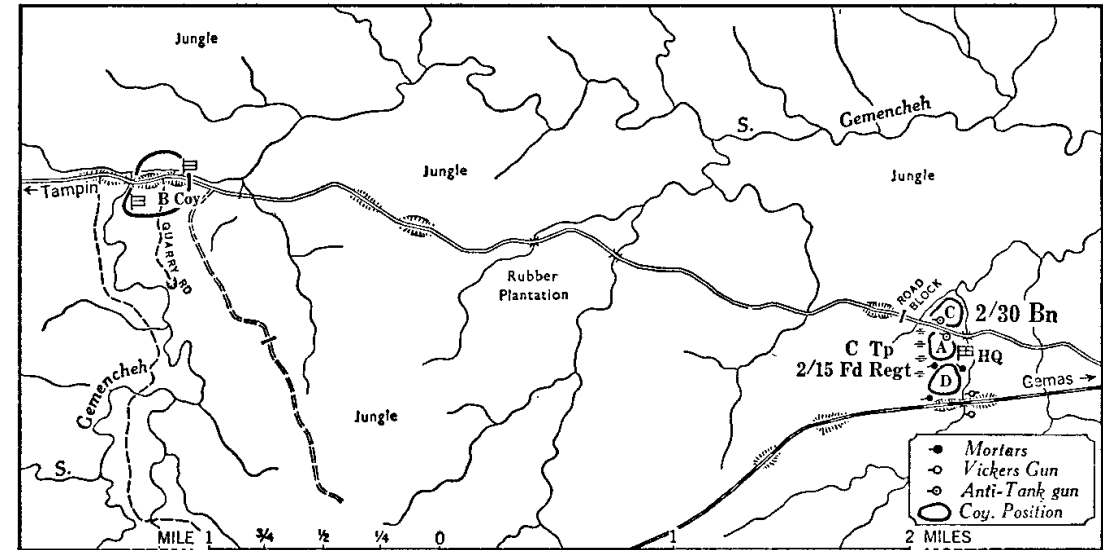
- Both he and Duffy soon found, however, that their signal lines back from the ambush position had gone dead—cut, it was believed, by Japanese who had discovered them at the crucial moment in the artillery fire plan. In the absence of radios there remained no means of calling down artillery fire on the enemy troops and transport which it was assumed would bank up on the far side of the bridge.
- Battalion headquarters, straining their ears for the sound of the bridge being blown, heard nothing they could rely upon as a signal that the action had commenced, and that would indicate when and where artillery fire was required.
- The ambush had caught the Japanese completely by surprise. Their rifles were strapped to their cycles, and there was little opportunity to use either their bayonets or their grenades.



- In twenty minutes it was all over. Of the sight across the river, Duffy related: "... the entire 300 yards of road was thickly covered with dead and dying men—the result of blast when the bridge was blown up and the deadly fire of our Bren guns."

# 14<sup>th</sup> January - Gemas

- Duffy now ordered withdrawal, especially as so many Japanese had been let through the ambush before the action commenced.
- In the withdrawal Head and some of his platoon became engaged with these Japanese, who had turned back. He shot an enemy officer, but was himself wounded and had to be supported by Sergeant Doolan to the rendezvous at Quarry road.
- Geikie, who with his platoon also encountered the enemy, led several successful bayonet attacks and he too was wounded, but not badly.
- Gordon's and Garner's parties, after fighting fiercely, joined company headquarters in the jungle near Quarry road. Jones' platoon also withdrew, fighting a rearguard action.
- As it appeared that the Japanese were in strength on the trunk road, Duffy led his company in single file through the jungle in an attempt to move round the enemy's flank.
- At battalion headquarters it was realised that the signal lines to Duffy's company had been cut, and that action of some kind probably was in progress. Patrols were sent out to endeavour to restore communications.



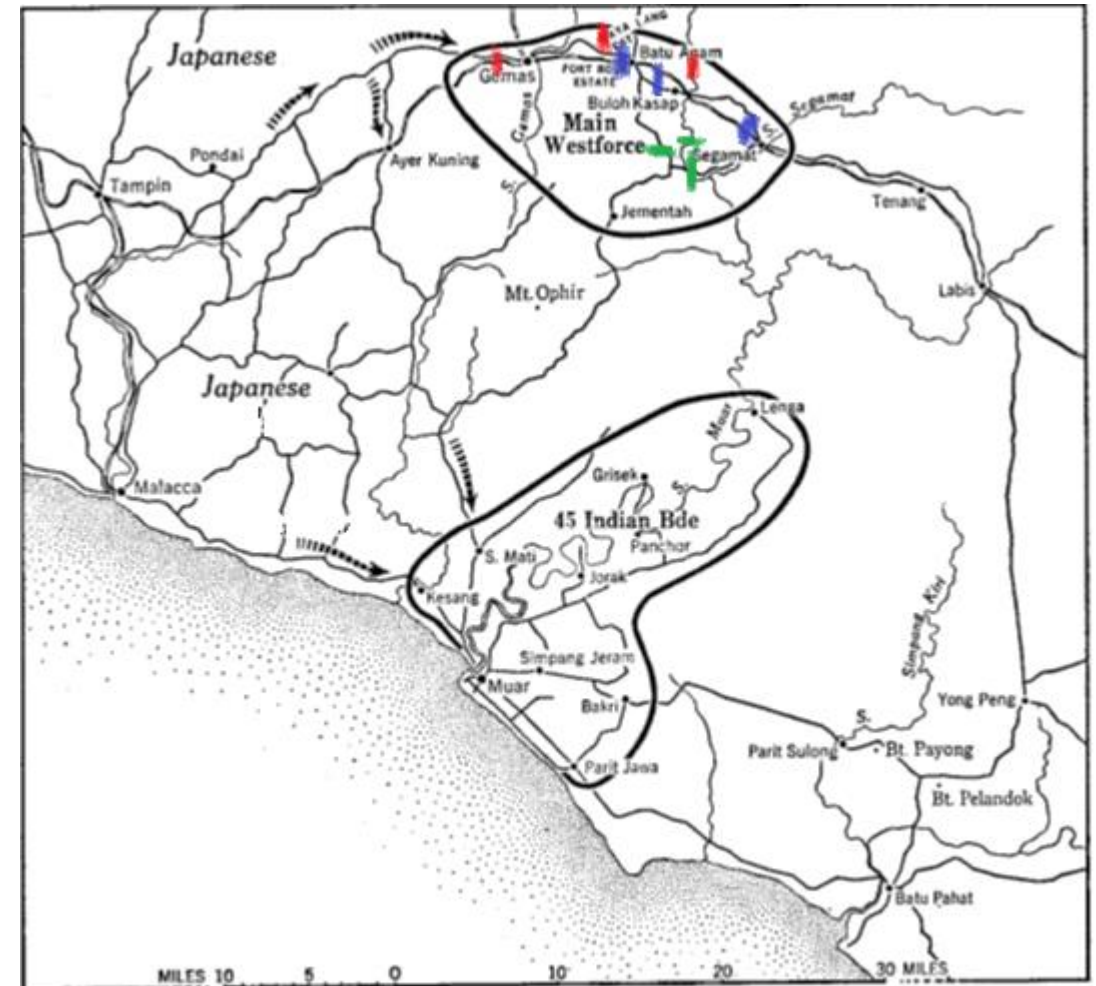
- The patrols became involved in several clashes with enemy troops. It was discovered that the Japanese were in control of the Gemencheh ambush area (where they restored the bridge for traffic within six hours of its having been blown up) and were advancing in force, with tanks, towards the battalion's main position.

# 14<sup>th</sup> January – Gemas - WWKN

- Starting soon after 9 a.m. on 15th January nine tanks appeared progressively near the road-block in front of Lamacraft's company.
- The tanks, and machine-guns dismounted from them, were quickly sending a stream of fire along the road supplemented by mortars and machine-guns brought up by Japanese infantry. The Australian mortar and anti-tank fire hit and disabled all these tanks. Artillery then opened fire on the troops in the Japanese rear.
- The Japanese still pressed forward along the road and commenced flanking movements, but the combined effect of the Australian artillery and infantry fire was too much for them. The assault was over within an hour, at heavy cost to the enemy.
- As reports flowed in to battalion headquarters it was realised that the Japanese were massing much more quickly than had been thought likely. Their use of tanks, so soon after the Gemencheh bridge had been blown, added to the danger that the battalion would be overpowered or cut off if it attempted to hold on to its advanced position. It was accordingly decided that a plan for the battalion's withdrawal behind the Sungei Gemas should be put into effect that evening.
- Japanese planes were bombing Gemas, and suddenly dive bombers pounded battalion headquarters. Except at the command post, no trenches had been dug, and the men could only lie on the ground as the bombs exploded around them.
- The speed with which the Japanese repaired the bridge was attributed to there being a sawmill near by, from which ready-cut timber was available. The work could, of course, have been hampered and perhaps made impossible by artillery fire but for the failure of the signals from the ambush area and consequent uncertainty at battalion headquarters as to what had happened and the whereabouts of Duffy's company.
- Owing to the rapidly mounting strength of the Japanese on the immediate front, the battalion began to withdraw in mid-afternoon. Although they were being fired at by a Japanese tank over open sights, and were also under heavy mortar fire, Bren carriers under Captain Thompson persisted, until they were ordered to withdraw, in attempts to pull out antitank guns. Heavy mud had bogged anti-tank and field guns, and only one—a 25-pounder was saved.

# 16<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- Two battalions of the 45<sup>th</sup> brigade had been placed along the Sungei Muar's winding course. The battalions were the
- 4/9th Jats, with three companies south of the river and fighting patrols north of the river; and the
- 7/6th Rajputana Rifles, from Jorak to the mouth of the river, with two companies north of it.
- The sectors were of fifteen and nine miles respectively.
- The 5/18th Royal Garhwal were in reserve based on Bakri, with a company forward at Simpang Jeram on the inland road from Muar, and a detachment south of Parit Jawa, where another road came in from the coast to Bakri.
- The brigade was supported by the 65th Australian Battery (Major Julius) of the 2/15th Field Regiment.
- The disposition of two companies of the Rajputana Rifles on the far side of the river no doubt reflected Bennett's policy of "aggressive defence" and his enthusiasm for ambushing the enemy.



The Westforce front, 14th January 1942

# 16<sup>th</sup> January - Muar



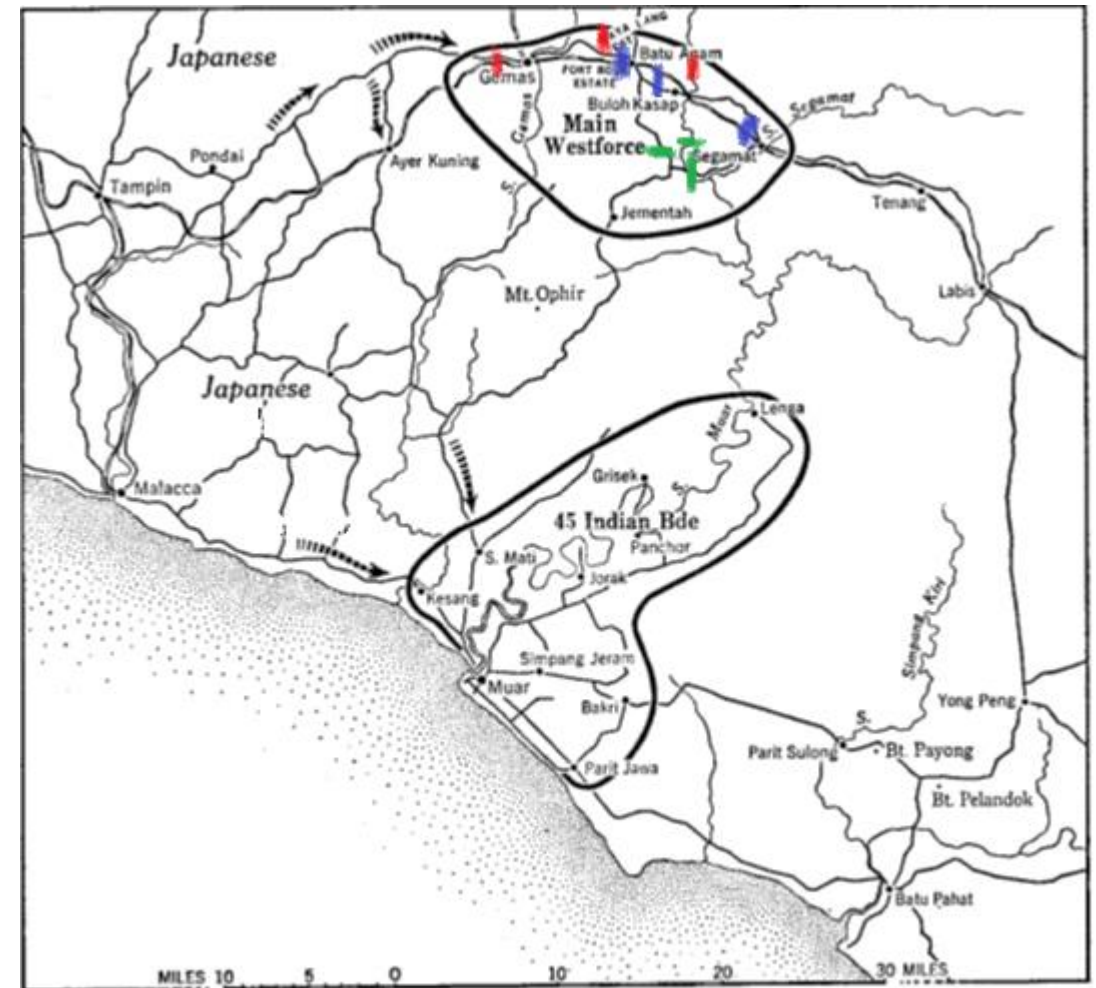
The Muar ferry crossing, looking south-east. The 45th Indian Brigade, on the left flank of Westforce, was disposed along 24 miles of river front, with detachments forward of the river.

- As there were no bridges in the vicinity of Muar and all boats thought likely to be useful to the enemy had been removed from the northern bank, the river presented a difficult obstacle, and
- 800 rounds of harassing fire during the night by a troop of the Australian gunners were a further deterrent.
- The Japanese nevertheless made rapid progress on the 16th January.
- Two guns under Lieutenant Withycombe were at one stage during the afternoon blazing over open sights from a position on the southern bank at landing craft which appeared at the mouth of the river. Although these withdrew, enemy troops had made a crossing upstream.
- The Rajput company east of Muar was attacked, and
  - though the flanking company on the downstream side was sent to its aid,
  - a company of Japanese reached the township from the east and overwhelmed battalion headquarters.



# 16<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- Both the Rajput companies north of the river had been lost, and few men of the other two companies got back.
  - During the night the remnant of the battalion withdrew down the coast to Parit Jawa, and then to Bakri.
  - The Rajput commander, his second-in-command, and all his company commanders had been killed or were missing.
- Gunners under Lieutenant McLeod on their way to the advanced headquarters of the 5/18th Royal Garhwal at Simpang Jeram had been ambushed near the headquarters early on the 16th, and one gun and three men were lost.
- The Garhwalis were attacked the same day, soon after 11 a.m., and moved off the road into the shelter of rubber trees.
  - Close fighting followed, in which hand grenades and bayonets were used; but
  - after a costly and unsuccessful counter-attack at 1 p.m. a withdrawal was ordered.
- By this time the officer commanding the force was among the killed. Communications to the rear had failed soon after the attack opened.



# 16<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- The 4/9th Jats on the right were not attacked, but having discovered that the enemy had crossed the river their commander withdrew the forward companies and concentrated on the road from Panchor to Muar.
- The Australian battery stuck to its task at Muar until 8.30 p.m., then made for Bakri by the coast road through Parit Jawa.
- The Japanese were then free to continue their advance by both this road and the one through Simpang Jeram.
- Bakri, headquarters of the 45th Indian Brigade, and only 30 miles from the trunk road at Yong Peng, was now threatened.
- Still worse, Japanese were reported late on 16th January to have landed south-west of the town of Batu Pahat and to have moved inland. They were thus a threat to the 45th Brigade from its rear, and to Westforce communications.
- Because of the collapse of resistance on the Muar, Bennett decided on the evening of 16th January to send his reserve battalion, the 2/29th (Lieut-Colonel Robertson) to reinforce the Muar front instead of using it as he had planned to relieve the 2/30th after its action at Gemas.
- Unaware of the extent of the enemy forces in the Muar area, he directed that it should be used to counter-attack towards Muar, and gave it a troop of 2/4th Australian Anti-Tank Regiment and one of armoured cars from the Loyals for what he considered good measure. He said that his information was that Muar had been taken with a force of about 200 men.



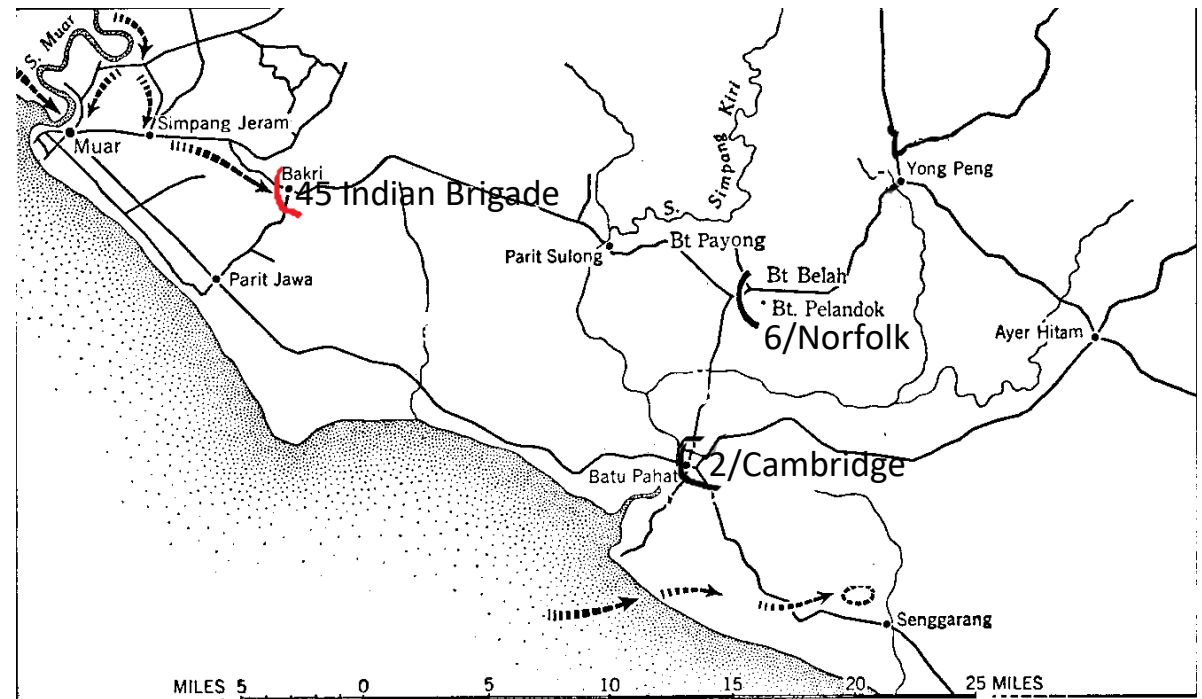
(Australian War Memorial)

Laying an Australian 25-pounder field gun, Malaya, January 1942.

He emphasised that the Muar-Yong Peng road was vital, and that should the enemy be encountered in strength it must be held for seven days to enable the forces north of Yong Peng to be withdrawn.

# 17<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- General Percival extended III Corps' responsibilities to the trunk road from Ayer Hitam to Yong Peng and thence to Batu Pahat, and ordered the newly-arrived 53rd Brigade Group to the Ayer Hitam area.
- The 6/Norfolk was sent to hold the defile between Bukit Pelandok on the south and Bukit Belah on the north.
- The 2/Cambridgeshire went to relieve the garrison at Batu Pahat.
- At a conference between Percival, Bennett, and Key at noon on 17<sup>th</sup> January, Percival ordered that the 2/19th Australian Battalion (of 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade) at Jemaluang (close to the east coast) be relieved immediately by the 5/Norfolk and go to Muar.
- Because of the inexperience of the 5/Norfolk, Lieut-Colonel Anderson, commanding the 2/19th Battalion, left his second-in-command, Major Oakes, with three other officers and several N.C.O's to help the newcomers to take over their positions.

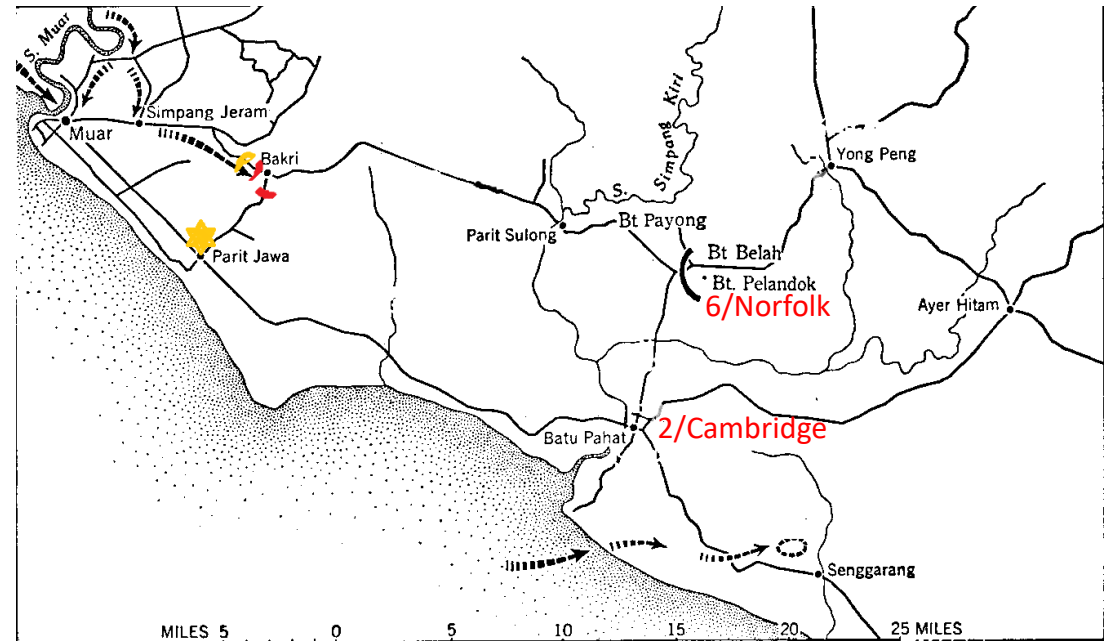


## Segamat

During the afternoon of the 17th the Japanese flanking movements pressed the southern flank of the 2/30th, which was withdrawn during the night to an eastward position, nearer Batu Anam.

# 17<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- Brigadier Duncan (45th Brigade) had been ordered by Bennett to clear the Muar area of the enemy as soon as possible. Duncan planned to launch counter - attacks once the isolated 4/9th Jats had come in and the Australians had arrived.
- When the 2/29th got to Bakri during the afternoon of the 17<sup>th</sup> the position on the Muar road was held by the 5/18th Garhwal, but it was to move by night to Parit Jawa.
- Robertson decided to rest his men during the early part of the night about a mile and a half forward of Bakri, and then to attempt to capture Simpang Jeram at daylight on the 18th.
- An armoured car sent forward to reconnoitre was fired upon at a Japanese road-block two miles forward of the battalion's position. And by 7 p.m. the forward troops were under heavy mortar fire.
- A small force of Japanese then arrived, and in the darkness, hand grenades and bayonets were used in disposing of them.



The Garhwalis were nearing Parit Jawa village when they were ambushed and dispersed. Only some 400 men straggled back to a position on the Parit Jawa road a mile from Bakri held by remnants of the 7/6th Rajputana Rifles.

# 18<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- Robertson consequently sent Captain Sumner's company of the 2/29th to a position covering the junction at Bakri of the Parit Jawa and Muar roads.
- A troop of the gunners came under counter-battery fire about 1 a.m. on 18th January. The fire was so intense and accurate that one of the guns was disabled, an ammunition trailer was set on fire by direct hits, and the troop had to withdraw.
- Eight Japanese light tanks approached the 2/29<sup>th</sup>'s position frontally at 6.45 a.m.
- An anti-tank gun was sited at each end of a cutting through which the Muar road ran.
- The anti-tank guns were sending a stream of shells into them. At last they were immobilised but continued firing in all directions; until one by one they were smashed, set on fire, and rendered useless and uninhabitable.



*(Australian War Memorial)*

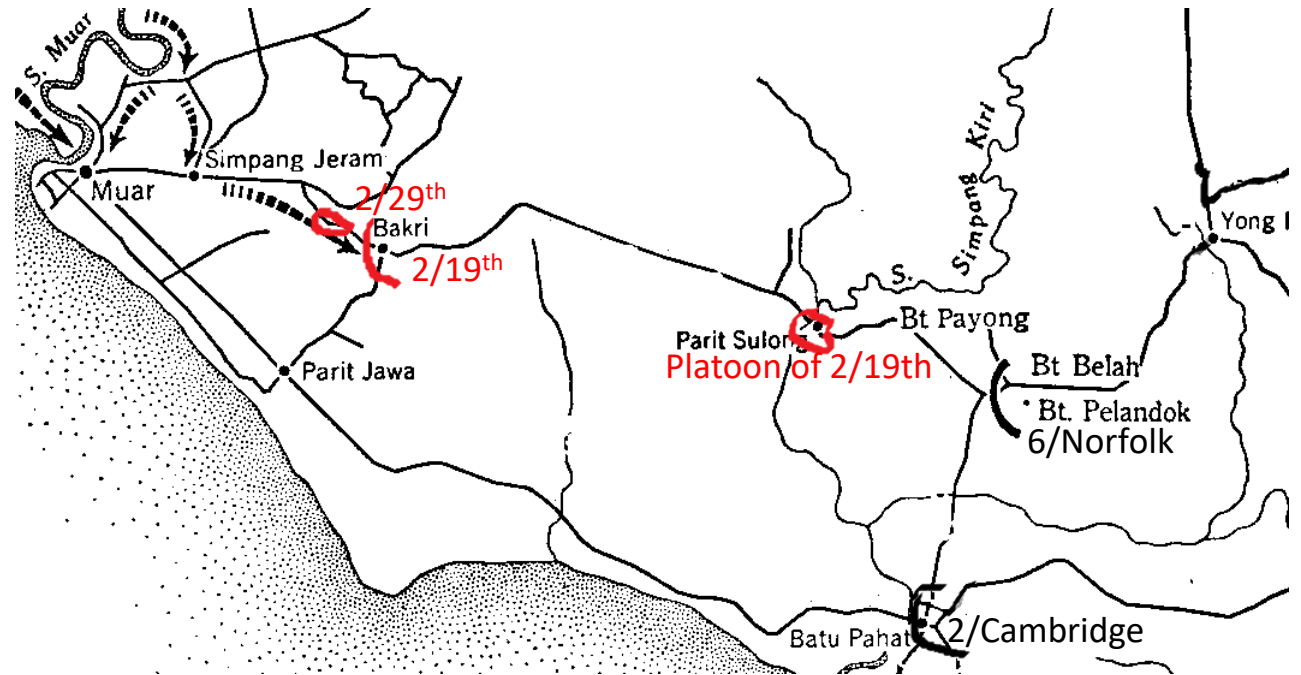
The crew of the rear anti-tank gun, which accounted for six of the nine tanks destroyed.

The company in the left forward position then came under heavy automatic fire and sniping from the branches of trees by Japanese who apparently had infiltrated during the night. First one, then two more carriers came forward, and though their armour failed to resist Japanese bullets and nearly every man in them was wounded, they silenced the enemy machine-guns.



# 18<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- Anderson and his 2/19th Battalion, 700 strong, were deployed in the village and in positions near by on the roads to Parit Jawa and Muar to add depth to the position and, when the Jats came in, to take the offensive.
- One platoon was left to guard the bridge over the Sungei Simpang Kiri at Parit Sulong.
- At midday an armoured car patrol sent from Bakri towards the 2/29th Battalion position encountered a road-block, and was fired on from both sides of the road.
- Sumner's company of the 2/29th was sent with carrier, armoured car, and mortar support, to dispose of the block and rejoin his battalion. Its initial attack failed but eventually, with the aid of two platoons of the 2/19th, Sumner's company got through, leaving the road free of obstruction.



- The company found Major Olliff now in command, for Robertson had been killed.
- Trucks which came through with Sumner's company were sent back to Bakri carrying wounded.

# 18<sup>th</sup> January - Muar

- A Jats officer reached Bakri at 4 p.m, and reported that his battalion was six miles north-west of the village. By 5 p.m. Bakri and the 2/19th Battalion's positions were under shell fire, but nothing had been done to bring the Jats in.
- Duncan recalled to the brigade perimeter for the night those of the Rajputs and Garhwalis who were able to return. They had with them only two British officers, many had lost their equipment, and they were in poor condition for further fighting.
- Artillery support was provided by the 65th Australian Battery which had resisted the initial attack on Muar. By midnight of 18/19<sup>th</sup> the battery had fired 4,795 rounds.
- Bayonets and grenades were again successfully used in dealing with two attacks on the 2/29th Battalion's left forward troops as they were about to withdraw into night perimeter.

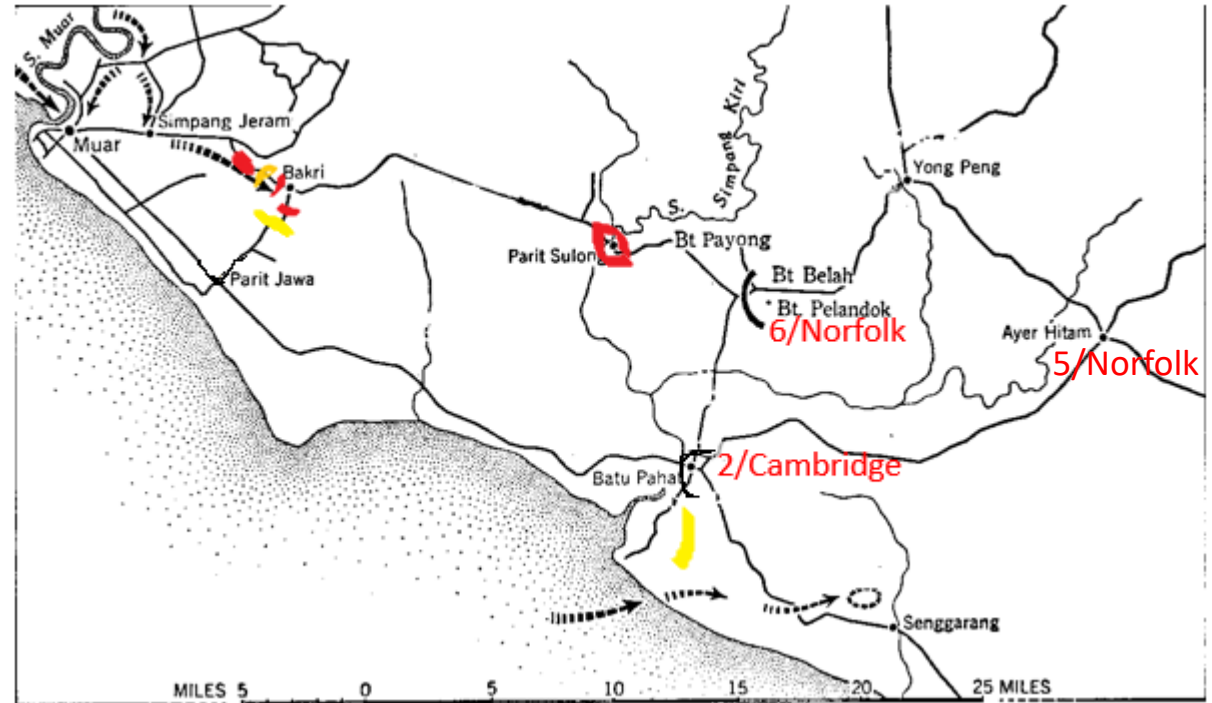


*(Australian War Memorial)*

Two of the nine Japanese tanks knocked out by anti-tank guns forward of Bakri on 18th January.

# 19<sup>th</sup> January – Land, Muar

- Because of the danger to Batu Pahat, General Key early on 19th January ordered the 15th Brigade (Brigadier Challen) to defend the township,
- and reinforced the garrison with the British Battalion.
- He moved the 5/Norfolk of the 53rd Brigade, from Jemaluang, to Ayer Hitam.
- With the 2/Cambridgeshire at Batu Pahat
- the 53<sup>rd</sup> brigade then had only the 6/Norfolk to hold the Bukit Pelandok defile, now threatened by the Japanese move inland from near Batu Pahat.
- Key therefore ordered the 3/16th Punjab (about half strength) to its aid.
- At a conference with Heath, Bennett and Key during the afternoon of the 19th, Percival decided that
  - the 53rd Brigade should be further reinforced by the 2/Loyals (a battalion which had not left Singapore Island throughout its training in Malaya);
  - that the 45th Brigade should be withdrawn through the 53rd Brigade to west of Yong Peng;
  - and
  - that the withdrawal from Segamat should continue.



# 19<sup>th</sup> January – Land, Bakri

- Brigadier Duncan planned an attack along the road from Bakri to Muar during the morning by "A" Company of the 2/19th Battalion, to allow the Jats to come in and to test the strength of the enemy.
  - The company, which occupied a rubber-planted ridge to the left and forward of battalion headquarters, was relieved by a section of carriers, and assembled for its task, but was kept waiting for the anti-tank gun support.
  - Heavy firing from the carriers was heard at 8 a.m., and they were driven from the ridge under strong attack by a force which apparently had been deployed from the Parit Jawa road east of B company.
  - Anderson quickly sent two A Coy platoons into the fight—one to make a frontal attack, while the other moved along the ridge against the enemy's right flank.
  - When the attack had been launched, B company was moved back, parallel with the road, towards the ridge, to come in on the enemy's rear. These tactics caught the assailants on the wrong foot.

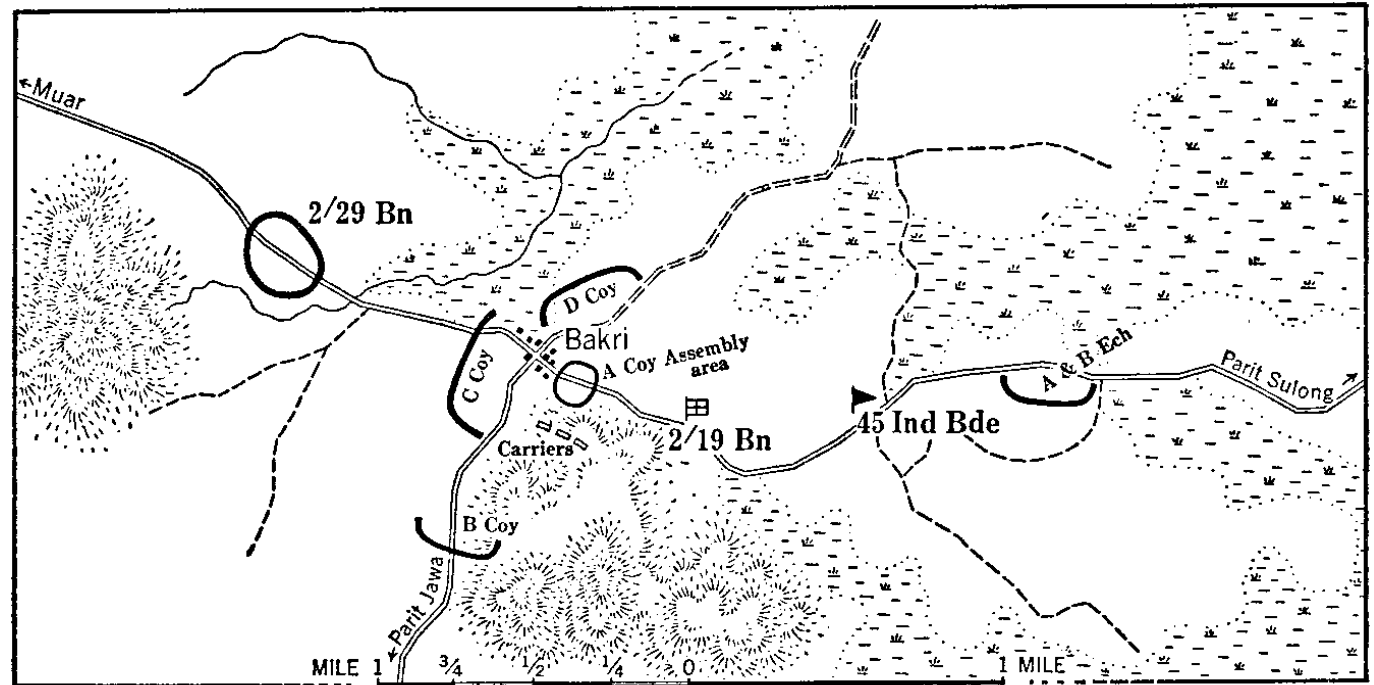
# 19<sup>th</sup> January – Land, Bakri

- One of B coy platoon commanders, recorded that the Japanese "literally ran round in circles".
  - Lieutenant Reynolds was standing among a litter of dead around a gun position when one of the prostrate figures partly raised himself, with a grenade in one hand. Reynolds shot him, but was hit under the right arm and on the head when the grenade exploded. He urged his men on as he fell close to another badly-wounded Japanese.
  - "I saw him pushing his rifle laboriously towards me so I picked up my pistol from under me and with my left hand took careful aim and pulled the trigger for all my worth, but it would not fire. I can tell you I was extremely annoyed. Luckily my batman saw the Jap up to his tricks, so he shot him.
  - After dressing Reynolds' wounds, his batman was attacked by two Japanese wearing only short trousers. He disposed of them with two shots fired from his hip, and Reynolds was able to make his way to an aid post.
- The third platoon of A company was thrown in against the Japanese right flank, to complete their confusion. It joined B company in a bayonet charge and hand-to-hand fighting. The Japanese were routed, leaving some 140 dead, as against ten Australians killed and fifteen wounded, most of them in A company.
- During the action, the battalion's transport sergeant (sgt Meal) brought news that the transport, behind Bakri on the road to Parit Sulong, had been suddenly attacked by 400 to 500 Japanese, who apparently had come from the direction of Parit Jawa. They were establishing a road-block, and Meal had been seriously wounded in getting through.
- A section of carriers was sent to force a way through to the transport, but was unable to get past the block.



# 19<sup>th</sup> January – Land, Bakri

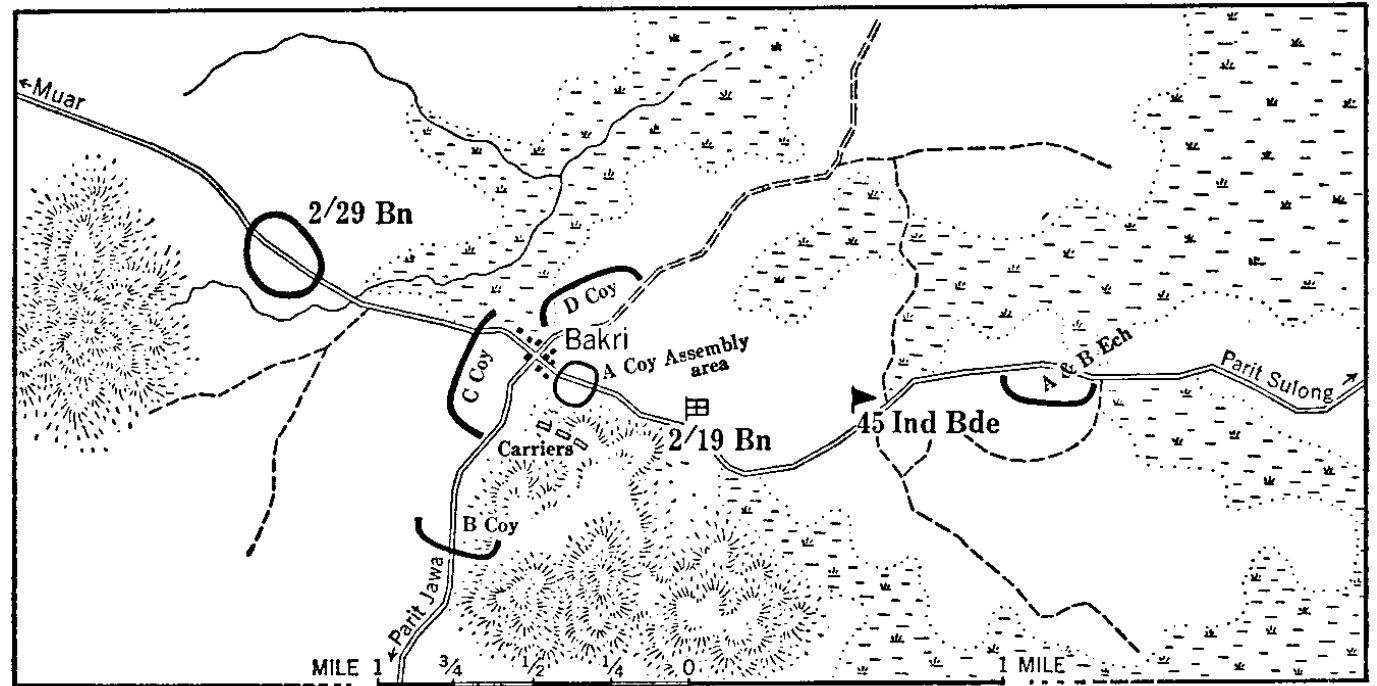
- At 10.00 am Japanese aircraft scored a direct hit on brigade headquarters. Brigadier Duncan was stunned and Major Julius, commander of the 65th Battery, was killed. All Duncan's staff, except the acting brigade major, were killed or wounded.
- At the brigade major's request, Lieut-Colonel Anderson of the 2/19th took command of the brigade, which but for the missing Jats had practically ceased to exist except as a liability.
- Anderson quickly decided that in view of the threat to the line of communication, the 2/29th must be speedily withdrawn to a position behind Bakri road junction, and the front confined to the one road leading from there back to Yong Peng.



Bakri, 8 a.m. 19th January

# 19<sup>th</sup> January – Land, Bakri

- Anderson contemplated another stand at Parit Sulong if further withdrawal became necessary.
- Parit Sulong lay behind eight miles of straight causeway through swampy soil devoid of cover, and three miles of road nearest the village lined with rubber trees. If the force could gain the shelter of the rubber, it might concentrate fire on enemy troops coming along the causeway.
- However the Jats had not arrived at Bakri, and, rather than abandon them, Anderson decided to delay withdrawal of the 2/29th Battalion for the time being.
- The further delay resulted in his companies becoming fully committed as the morning wore on meeting threats from the south and north-west. Keegan's company (B) was again heavily attacked, but with the assistance of Bren carriers and Indian mortars, it drove the Japanese off and inflicted further substantial losses.

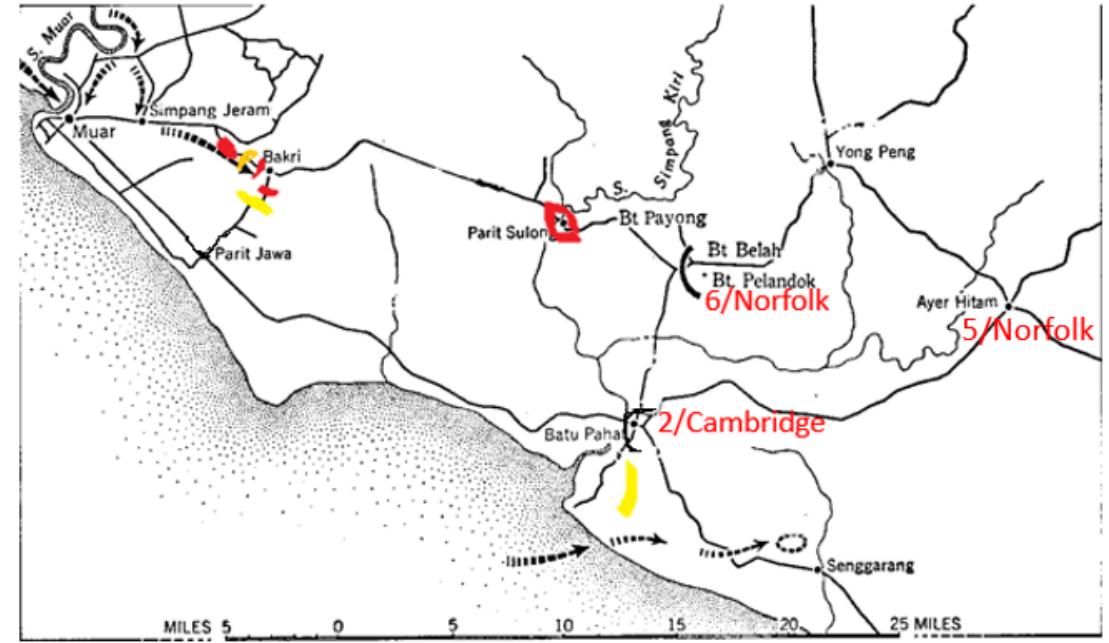


Bakri, 8 a.m. 19th January

- Some of the Jats reached the 2/29th's position early in the afternoon. They had lost contact with their transport.

# 19 January – Land, Bakri

- Olliff (2/29<sup>th</sup>) was ordered to disengage from the enemy at 6.30 p.m., and an artillery barrage to assist his withdrawal was arranged.
- All Anderson's reserves were sent to help resist attacks, which had reached serious proportions, on his companies.
- Japanese machine-gunners were beaten off the right flank of the 2/29<sup>th</sup> Battalion after the Jats had appeared. An attack in force on the left flank followed, but the Australians chased the enemy some hundreds of yards in a counter-attack.
- In the course of the battalion's withdrawal Olliff and others were killed, and contact was lost with the leading company, which came under heavy machine-gun fire while crossing open ground.
- The main body of the battalion swung east, and reached Bakri with relatively few casualties but over 150 had lost contact and were still missing.
- The 2/29<sup>th</sup> battalion, comprising seven officers and 190 others moved into the 2/19<sup>th</sup> Battalion's perimeter, on the Parit Sulong side of Bakri.
- Those of the Jats who mustered at Bakri numbered six officers and about 200 men. Their CO, Lieut-Colonel Williams, had been killed. After he had sized up the condition of the Jats Anderson decided that endeavours to assist HQ company, guarding the transport, would have to wait until next morning.



## Batu Pelandok

- The two forward companies of the 6/Norfolk at the Bukit Pelandok defile had been surprised and forced back during the day by Japanese who had come in from the coast, and who thereupon gained control of the road to Bakri at that point.
- Brigadier Duke of the 53rd Brigade ordered a counter-attack at dawn next day.

## Segamat

- The withdrawal from the Segamat sector on 19th January, was complicated by minor Japanese infiltrations; but serious infiltration was prevented.

## Burma

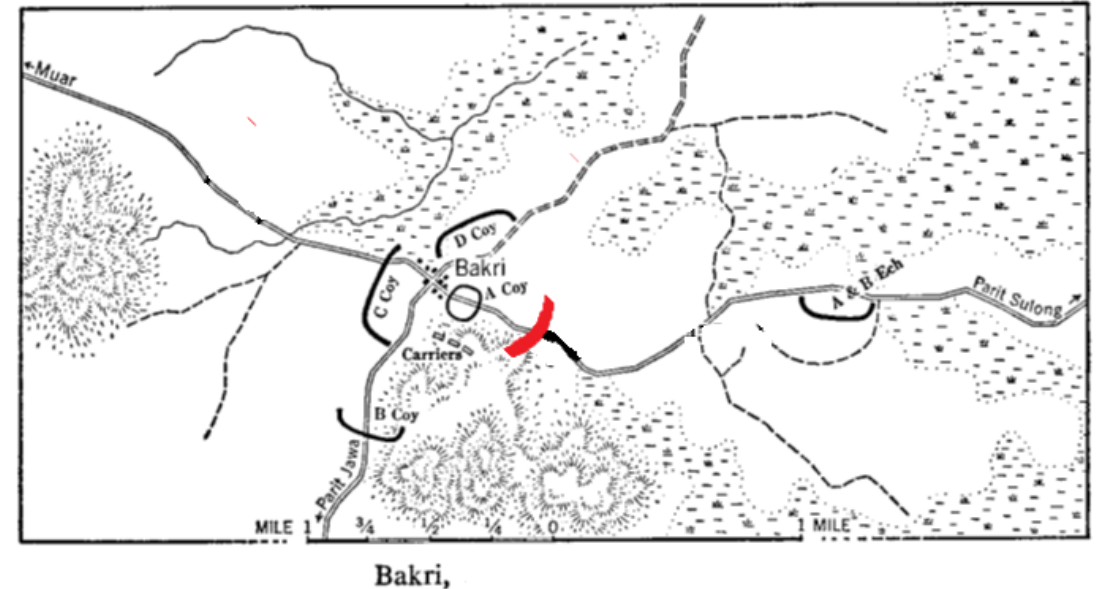
- Japanese entered Tavoy on the 19th.

# 20<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- **Segamat**
- At night the 9th Indian Division was withdrawn through the 27th Australian Brigade, which had been withdrawn behind the Sungei Segamat.
- The movement was hampered by the township of Segamat having caught fire as a result of an Australian officer's attempt to prevent foodstuffs falling into Japanese hands; but the men plunged through the heat and showering sparks, and at dawn on 20th January had reached the Tenang area, midway between Segamat and Labis.
- **Muar**
- In an attempt to recapture the Bukit Pelandok defile, two companies of the 3/16th Punjab led by the battalion commander, Lieut-Colonel Moorhead, set out at 4 a.m. on 20th January to reach a company of the 6/Norfolk which had retained its position on the northern slopes of Bukit Belah, overlooking from the north the road to Parit Sulong. Another company of the Punjabis moved to occupy a height about 500 yards farther north, and did so unopposed.
- It was intended that upon completion of these moves the Norfolks, assisted by covering fire from the Punjabis, should recapture Bukit Pelandok.
- The two companies were mistaken for Japanese, however, and fired on by the Norfolks. As soon as this had been stopped, Japanese blazed at the troops from near-by concealment. Moorhead was killed and his men and the Norfolks were driven off the feature.
- So serious were the losses that despite the urgent need to clear the road to Bakri, Brigadier Duke (53<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) decided that he would have to wait for the Loyals before attacking again.
- A Norfolk detachment which had relieved an Australian platoon at the Parit Sulong bridge, having been without rations since the 18th, and thinking that it had been cut off, left the bridge during the morning of the 20th and set off across country to Batu Pahat. The Japanese then established themselves at the bridge, blocking Anderson's line of withdrawal.

# 20<sup>th</sup> January - Bakri

- **Bakri**
- With his force hemmed in at Bakri, Anderson had given orders before daylight on the 20th for a five-mile withdrawal towards Parit Sulong by nightfall, to the edge of the open swampland where further passage in daylight would expose it to air attack.
- The force was now organised as a battalion of five companies, with two companies of Jats and a composite force of Rajputs and Garhwalis attached.
  - The advance-guard was Captain Keegan 's company, followed on the right of the road by Captain Beverley's and on the left by Captain Westbrook's
  - The body of the column included transport, guns, Indian troops, and Captain Snelling 's company of the 2/19th (in reserve).
  - The rearguard, commanded by Captain Hughes, comprised the 2/29th's "B" Company and two companies of Jats.
  - One anti-tank gun was posted at each end of the column, and all gunners without guns served as infantry.





# 20<sup>th</sup> January - Bakri

- Keegan's company moved off at 7 a.m., but was held up at a swamp defile by Japanese dug in on a slight rise south of the road, and by a roadblock.
- The company fought vigorously, and Lieutenant Ibbott, a 36 year old farmer from Cootamundra, led a gallant flank attack in which he and three of his men reached the Japanese trenches before they were killed.
- The delay imposed by the Japanese was serious, however, for the force had not gained sufficient room, and being so bunched together was very vulnerable to air or artillery attack.
- The fact that Keegan's company was so close to the enemy prevented it being given supporting fire. Anderson therefore decided that a rapid and spirited assault was necessary to gain space, and ordered Beverley to lead his men singing into battle. This he did, and the company advanced singing Waltzing Matilda.
- The company drove the Japanese from its front, reached the area, now abandoned, where the 2/19th's transport had been, and then attacked the enemy from the rear.
- The halted column now came under shell fire. Keegan's company again attacked, and in a final assault, led by Anderson, the Japanese were routed and their road-block was destroyed.
- Anderson himself put two machine-gun posts out of action with grenades, which he always carried, and shot two Japanese with his pistol.



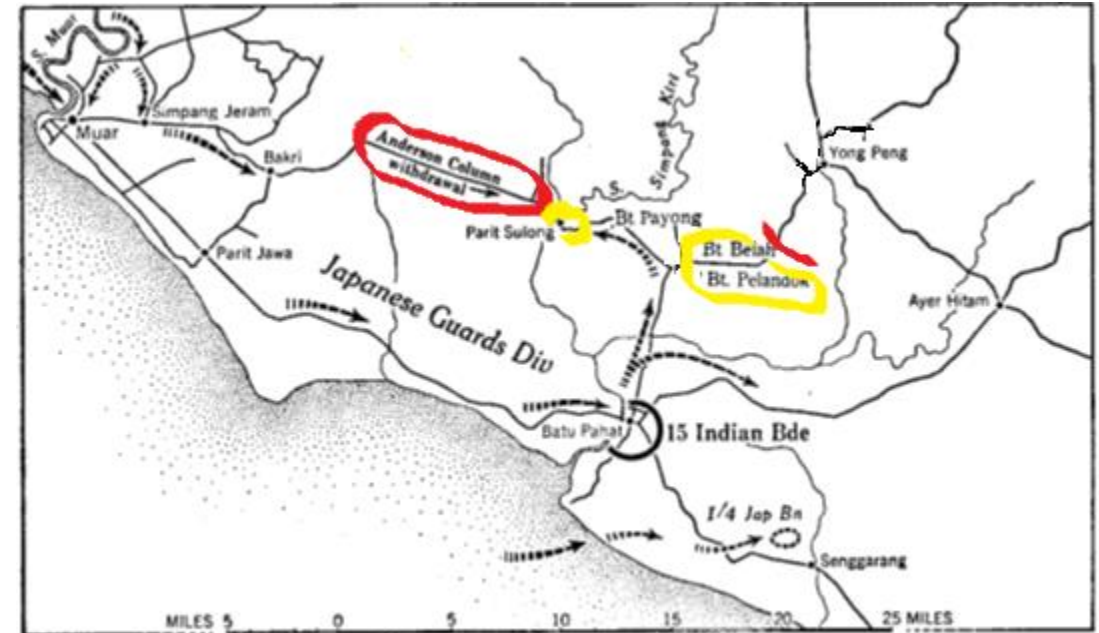
Lieut-Colonel C. G. W. Anderson,  
commander of the 2/19th Battalion.

# 20<sup>th</sup> January - Bakri

- Beverley's company now became the advance-guard as the force forged slowly ahead through the former transport harbour, where bodies and disabled vehicles gave evidence of a prolonged struggle.
- Anderson's column encountered another and stronger block soon after midday on the 20th, comprised of some of the battalion's own vehicles reinforced by tree-trunks, and with troops, estimated at two companies or more, with six heavy machine-guns, entrenched on a slight ridge beside it.
- Beverley's advance-guard became closely engaged. The rear of the column was now being pressed by the main body of the enemy.
- Westbrook's "D" Company was brought in on Beverley's left flank. Shells again burst among the closely-packed transport, by now increasingly occupied by wounded men and the rearguard gave ground.
- Four trucks were lost before Brigadier Duncan rallied his men and led a counter-attack by Jats and Australians. The trucks were recaptured, but Duncan was killed.
- Anderson decided to use his reserve company (Captain Snelling) to add momentum to the assault. Under cover of a small rise, Anderson addressed the company, directing them through Beverley's company, on the right, as he considered their best chance of success lay in this direction.
- Leading the assault, Snelling had his thigh shattered, but the Japanese were routed, many at the point of the bayonet. His company pursued the enemy along the road while the block was being removed under fire from snipers.

# 20<sup>th</sup> January - Bakri

- Key instructed Duke (53rd Brigade) during the afternoon (of 20th) to make a further attempt to clear the road to Parit Sulong.
- On Duke representing that the troops hitherto employed were not in condition to attack, Key agreed that the 2/Loyals, who had been continuously on the move for three days and nights and had not yet fully assembled in the brigade area, be used with artillery support as early as possible next day.



The withdrawal from Bakri  
Midnight 20<sup>th</sup>/21st

# 21<sup>st</sup> January – Malaya, Muar

- **Anderson's Column**

- Darkness fell upon the battered and weary column, and it moved on, through the open country it had had to avoid in daylight. By midnight (20/21<sup>st</sup>), Anderson had learned that an Indian soldier had reached the column with a report that Parit Sulong was now held by Japanese.
- Two dispatch riders sent to investigate found the village looted, were challenged in an unknown tongue at the bridge, and quickly raced back. Thus, when it had seemed that the column had fought its way to freedom, another struggle had to be faced.
- Making the most of the cover of darkness, the force came to the end of the open country, and was halted in the shelter of rubber trees at 2 a.m. on 21st January. A detachment led by Sergeant Lloyd Davies, sent to reconnoitre the bridge at Parit Sulong, was attacked there, and returned at 7.15.
- Although two Malays who had been encountered insisted that the bridge was held by the Sultan of Johore's men, Anderson disbelieved their report, and deployed his forward companies through the trees.
- Soon, after its night-long trek, the column had to fight again. The leading men met rapid fire, and were charged by 120 Japanese, whom they halted and held in the open by means of a flank attack.
- While Japanese heavy tanks came up to the rear of the column, where they were stopped by a section of 25-pounders of the 65th Battery under Sergeant Barton, carriers came forward and disposed of the frontal assault.
- The head of the column, now comprising Keegan's and Beverley's companies, reached the outskirts of Parit Sulong about 9.30 a.m., only to find that houses and other vantage points had been turned into Japanese machine-gun nests. The rear of the column (Maher's and Westbrook's companies) was being increasingly assailed by tanks and mechanised infantry.
- Between the head and rear of the column there was now a distance of only 1,200 to 1,500 yards. Aircraft were swooping down and spattering it with bullets. Wireless communication with Westforce had failed during the night, but was re-established by the signallers despite the inferno in which they were working.
- At 11 a.m. Indian troops, led by Major R. Anderson, were ordered to attack the village (Parit Sulong) from the west. Coming under heavy fire they swung wide, but got round to the north bank of the Simpang Kiri west of the bridge, and exchanged fire with Japanese across the water.
- Keegan's and Beverley's companies were held up until, with the aid of Pickup's carriers, which soon after midday engaged the enemy machine-guns at point-blank range, the companies managed to thrust through the village and also reach the north bank.

# 21<sup>st</sup> January – Malaya, Muar

- Beverley was now sent to investigate the possibility of attacking the bridge, but as the afternoon wore on, and pressure from the rear increased, Anderson decided that the column's remaining resources, especially of mortar bombs, were insufficient for attack with any real chance of success.
- Air strafing increased, and soon after 4 p.m. bombs added many more casualties.
- During the late afternoon and until after dark, the rear of the column was under intense fire.
- In a lull which followed, the rumble of approaching tanks was heard, and Lieutenant Ross and Sergeant Tate ran to a gun already set up in position on the road. In the darkness they couldn't find the ammunition, but found some grenades. Armed with these, they jumped into the ditches lining the road and made towards the tanks.
- Forty yards from the gun using grenades they managed to stop the leading tank. Racing back to the gun, they found its crew in position, and though the tank could not be seen at this distance the gun was aimed at where Ross and Tate had encountered it. The first shot hit the target, and after some more shots it burst into flames, forming a road-block behind which the gunners continued to fire on the enemy armour.
- The column had had little food for two days, and its mortar and artillery ammunition was almost exhausted. Anderson therefore sent a message to Bennett asking that if possible aircraft be used at dawn to bomb the approaches to the far end of the bridge, and to drop food and morphia.
- As the cipher books used by the signallers in the Muar area had been destroyed, he received a reply "Look up at sparrowfart"

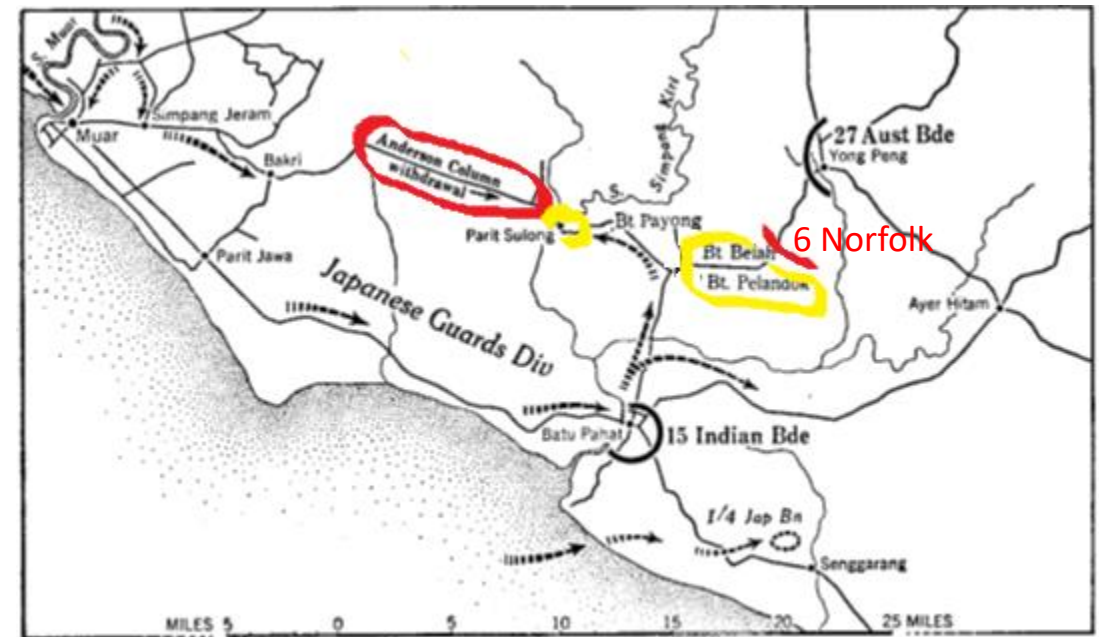


The Parit Sulong bridge towards which the 2/19th and 2/29th Battalions fought their way.



# 21<sup>st</sup> January - Malaya

- **Bukit Pelandok**
- The 21<sup>st</sup> was a day of continued and exasperating delays by the 53rd Brigade—arising it seemed to Australian officers from failure to realise the urgency of the situation, and no doubt largely from the brigade's lack of training and experience for the task it was set.
- An attack to recover the defile at Bukit Pelandok had been ordered by Key on the afternoon of 20th January. Absent action, stated to be due to faulty transmission of the order by a liaison officer, the order was repeated by Bennet and communicated by a staff officer at noon on the 21<sup>st</sup> (subsequent to a rearrangement of the commands) and reiterated with an order for immediate action at 16.00. Action was repeatedly deferred from early on the 21st, finally until 06.00 on the 22nd.
- **Segamat**
- The withdrawal from Segamat had continued, with little pressure from the enemy. Soon after dawn on 21st January the 27th Brigade took up positions covering the junction at Yong Peng of the road from Muar.
- **Mersing**
- On the East coast of Malaya patrols reported a gradual enemy approach to Mersing on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January, and the 2/20th Battalion area was under frequent air attack.



The withdrawal from Bakri  
Midnight 21<sup>st</sup>/22nd



## 22<sup>nd</sup> January – Malaya, Muar

- The Loyals were in position before dawn on 22nd January for their delayed attack on Bukit Payong, but Brigadier Duke insisted on further testing of the range of his artillery preparatory to opening up a barrage to cover the operation. As the ranging shots fell short, he ordered further postponement of the attack until 9 a.m. All prospect of taking the Japanese by surprise now had been lost, and the troops on the start-line were heavily attacked from the air. Brigadier Duke then decided to cancel the operation and reorganise into a defensive position. This decision was made after reference to H.Q. Westforce.
- Early on the 22nd—during a brief period while Japanese aircraft were absent from the scene—two cumbersome planes came over, dropped the food and morphia, Anderson had asked for, and went off after releasing bombs upon the Japanese at the far end of the bridge (two Albacores escorted by three buffaloes). Anderson decided, however, that the effect of the bombing had been insufficient to make it practicable to cross the river.
- Enemy tanks were again active, and made a flank attack supported by infantry. The number of casualties became so great that the column would be unable to fight much longer. As a last bid, when relief failed and hope was fading, Anderson ordered Beverley's company to test the resistance at the bridge. The response by the Japanese convinced Anderson that no chance of success lay in this direction.

# 22<sup>nd</sup> January – Malaya, Muar

- At 9 a.m., when the column faced annihilation if it remained where it was, he ordered destruction of carriers, guns, and transport, and withdrawal eastward through swamps and jungle by all capable of attempting it.
- By 10 a.m. an orderly withdrawal from Parit Sulong had been made.
- Another heavy loss, amounting to a brigade and a large part of two Australian battalions, had been inflicted on the defenders of Malaya.
- Percival reported:
- “The Battle of Muar was one of the epics of the Malayan campaign. Our little force by dogged resistance had held up a division of the Japanese Imperial Guards attacking with all the advantages of air and tank support for nearly a week, and in doing so had saved the Segamat force from encirclement and probable annihilation.”
- Anderson judged:
- “The well-trained Australian units showed a complete moral ascendancy of the enemy. They outmatched the Japs in bushcraft and fire control, where the enemy's faults of bunching together and noisy shouting disclosed their dispositions and enabled the Australians to inflict heavy casualties at small cost to themselves. When the enemy was trapped they fought most gamely. In hand-to-hand fighting they made a very poor showing against the superior spirit and training of the A.I.F.”

# Situation report 22nd January 1942

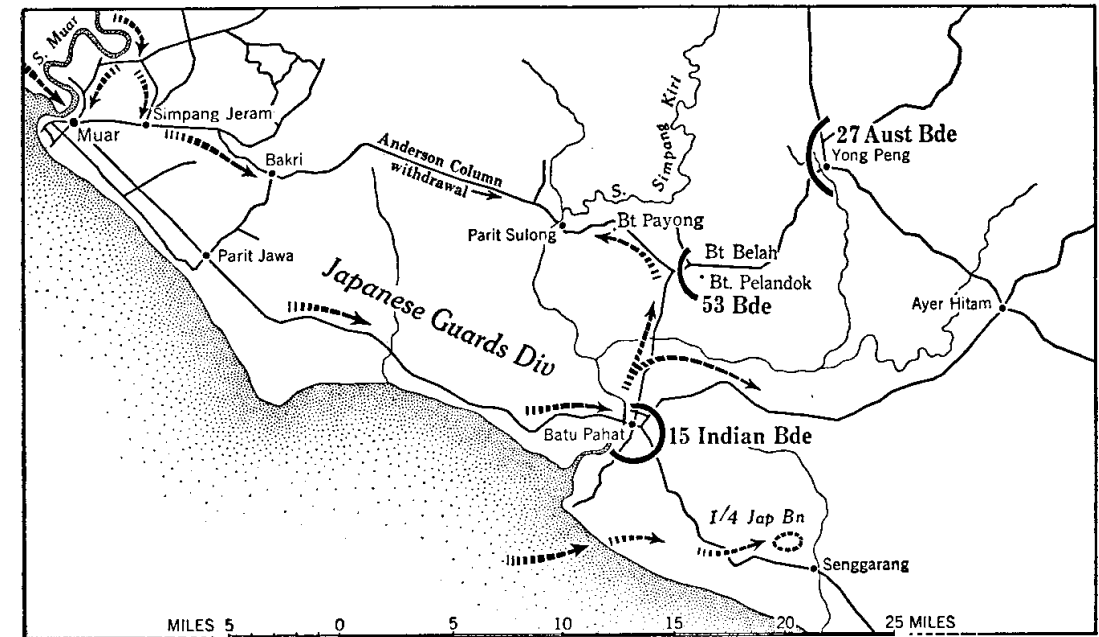
- **Malaya**

- The 8th Division AIF have inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese but have been unable to stop their advance. Two of the six infantry battalions have suffered very severe losses in the fighting at Muar.
- Despite destruction of bridges and boats during the withdrawal, the Japanese have been able to follow up quickly not only with infantry but with tanks and artillery as well and have been outflanking the allies by moving troops by sea down the west coast.
- Hurricanes are better than Buffaloes but are not superior to the zeros and there are too few of them.

- **NEI**

- The Japanese have taken Tarakan and Manado and an invasion force is approaching the Oil centre of Balikpapan in Eastern Borneo

- **General Wavell**, appointed Supreme Commander of ABDA, is trying to solve "the time problem between the rate of Japanese advance and the arrival of reinforcements".



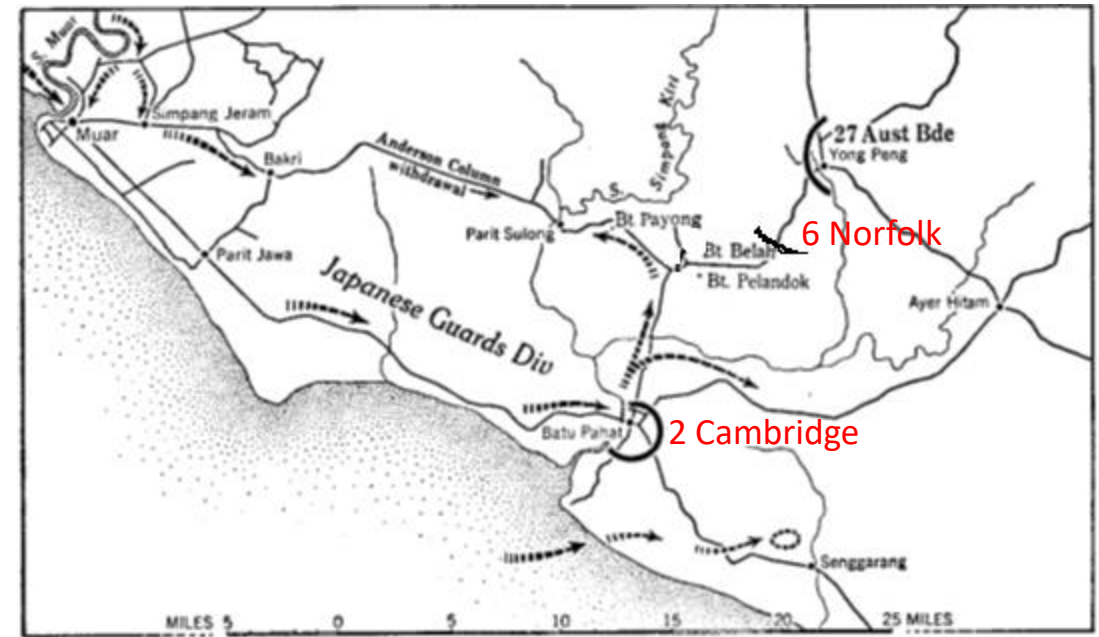
The withdrawal from Bakri

## Churchill

Is alternately giving firebreathing instructions to hold Singapore and musing about withdrawing to concentrate on defending Burma.

# 23<sup>rd</sup> January - Malaya

- The survivors of Anderson's column, after marching fifteen miles through jungle and swamp reached Yong Peng on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January.
  - Anderson had 271 left of his battalion, including fifty-two wounded who made their way back.
  - The 2/29th Battalion, which had first taken the weight of the main Japanese advance near Bakri, mustered only 130 men at Yong Peng. Its commander and most of its officers had been killed or were missing.
  - The 65th Battery numbered 98 at this stage, including 24 wounded.
  - Both battalions were ordered to be ready for battle again within a few days.
- On 23rd January General Percival gave orders that the general line Jemaluang-Kluang-Ayer Hitam-Batu Pahat was to be held, and there was to be no retraction from it without his permission.
  - He had in mind the pending arrival of the rest of the 18th British Division.
  - For this it was highly desirable that the enemy should be kept from the mainland airfields which lay behind the new defence line.

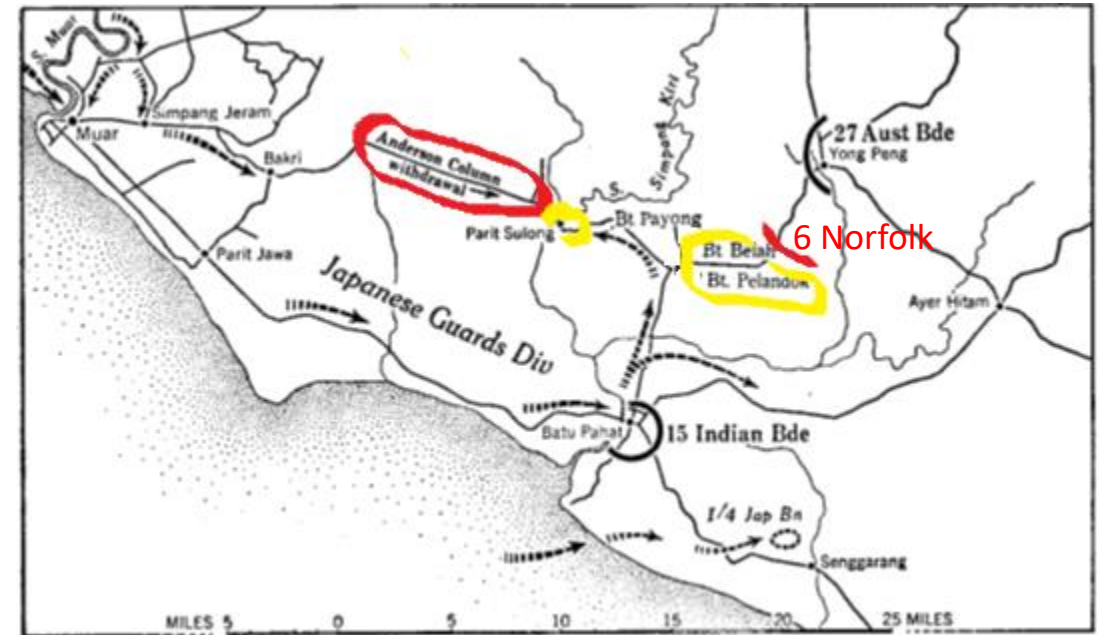


The withdrawal from Bakri

The defenders of Batu Pahat had been engaged in minor encounters with Japanese forces since 18<sup>th</sup> January. The road to Ayer Hitam had been blocked on the 21<sup>st</sup>, but the road block was temporarily cleared on the 22<sup>nd</sup> by forces moving from both ends. The road was blocked again on the 23<sup>rd</sup> but the garrison remained in defensive positions in Batu Pahat.

# 16-23 January Muar - WWKN

- The enemy force that achieved this result was the Guards Division, which had occupied the town of Malacca on 14th January.
- Although he had intended to rest his troops at this stage, General Nishimura concluded that if he could quickly overcome resistance in the Muar-Batu Pahat area it would greatly assist the Japanese forces on the trunk road, and be a triumph for his division.
- He decided to press on, with the 4th Guards Regiment less one battalion on the right and the 5th Guards Regiment on the left. The former was to occupy the attention of the forces holding the town of Muar while the latter made an upstream crossing of the river during the night and attacked from the east. The 4th was then to make for Batu Pahat along the coast road while the 5th thrust along the inland road to Yong Peng.



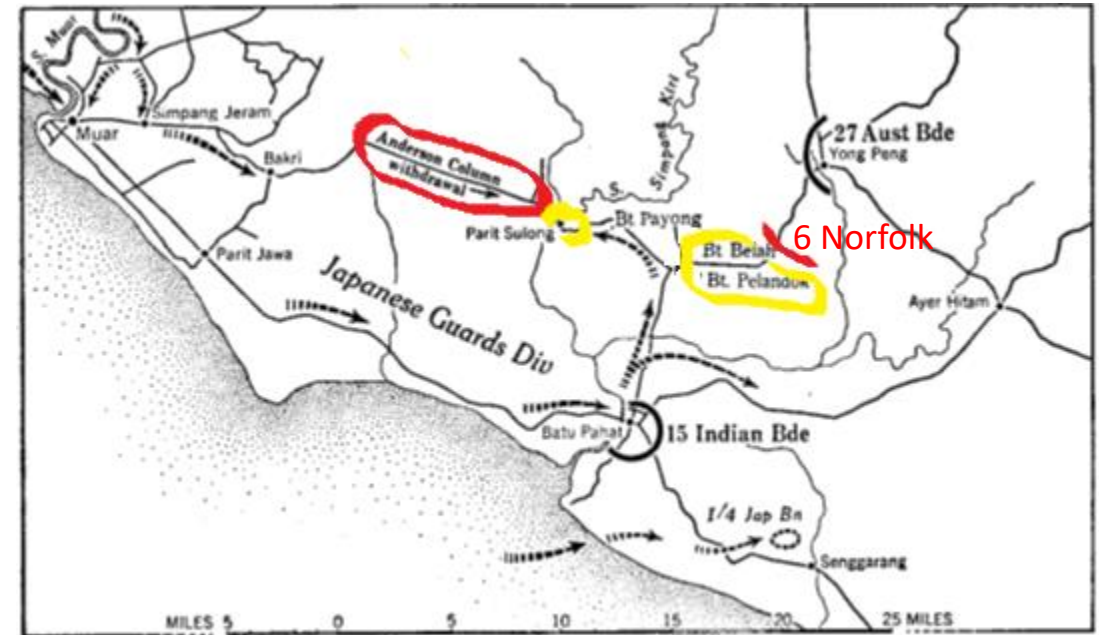
The withdrawal from Bakri  
Midnight 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>

The other battalion of the 4th Regiment was to go by sea down the coast, land between Batu Pahat and Rengit and conceal itself until the time came to cut the British line of withdrawal from Batu Pahat down the coast road.



# 16-23 January Muar - WWKN

- The Rajputs forward of the Muar were quickly trapped and overcome. The river was crossed by the 5th Regiment using a number of small boats, taken from rice-fields, to cross to larger craft on the other side. These craft were then brought back and used to transport larger parties of men. By dawn enough men had been ferried over to continue the advance.
- Once the crossing had been made the untried Indians whom they encountered were no match for the elite troops of the Japanese Army, especially as the secrecy and suddenness of the manoeuvre took the defenders by surprise.
- The boats which had been collected were used again for the main crossing at the mouth of the Muar, made without opposition on 17th January.
- After the initial crossing of the Muar, General Nishimura had ordered his 5th Regiment, with artillery and tank support, to attack the positions on the inland road to Bakri and cut the road immediately behind them, as quickly as possible.



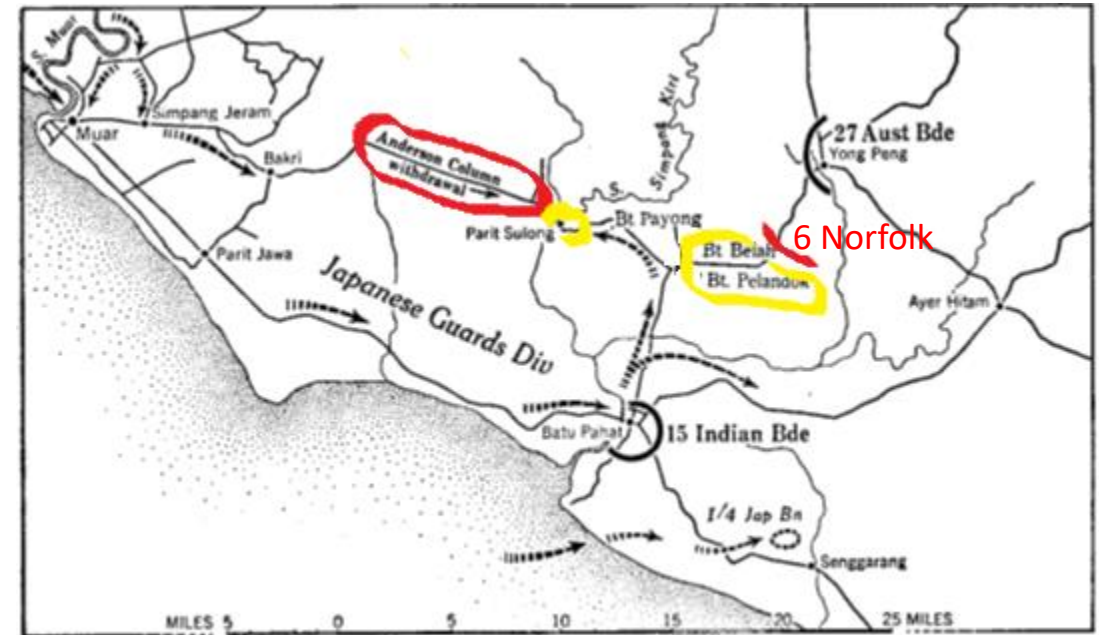
The withdrawal from Bakri  
Midnight 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>

A tank company advanced without infantry against the 2/29th Battalion and was wiped out. Bereft of its aid, the infantry (111/5th Guards Battalion) were unable to break the resistance and Nishimura reported that the engagement became "severe and sanguinary".



# 16-23 January Muar - WWKN

- The Japanese losses in the Muar area were a company of tanks and the equivalent of a battalion of men.
- The British troops in the Bukit Pelandok positions had been dispersed by two battalions of the 4th Guards Regiment sent to the area between Bukit Pelandok and Parit Sulong from near Batu Pahat to prevent reinforcements reaching Bakri; but the delay imposed on the force engaged against Anderson's column had been overcome only after Nishimura had "strenuously encouraged" attack.
- Nishimura decided that after his men had completed their task on the Muar-Yong Peng road he would swing his main force to the area of Batu Pahat.



The withdrawal from Bakri  
Midnight 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>

# 16-23 January Muar - WWKN

- Lt Col Anderson later reported:
  - The well-trained Australian units showed a complete moral ascendancy of the enemy.
  - They outmatched the Japs in bushcraft and fire control, where the enemy's faults of bunching together and noisy shouting disclosed their dispositions and enabled the Australians to inflict heavy casualties at small cost to themselves.
  - When the enemy was trapped they fought most gamely.
  - In hand-to-hand fighting they made a very poor showing against the superior spirit and training of the A.I.F.
- What was he missing?



Lieut-Colonel C. G. W. Anderson,  
commander of the 2/19th Battalion.

# 25<sup>th</sup> December

- **Malaya**

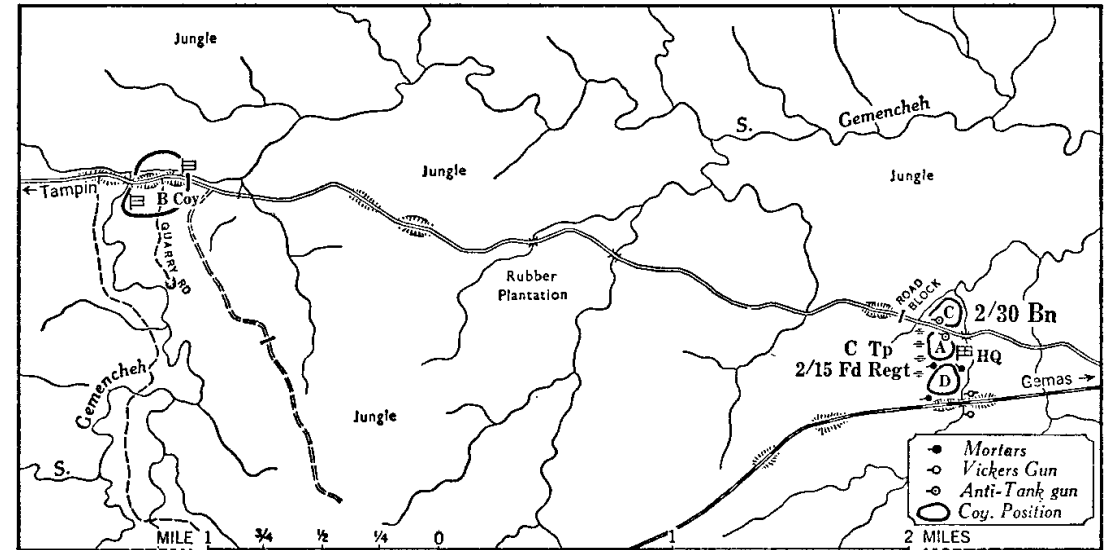
- Captain Spencer Chapman crossed the Perak on Christmas Day intending to meet Roseforce at a rendezvous and guide it to suitable targets. The rendezvous failed, but he lay by a roadside and watched the enemy. He saw:
- “hundreds and hundreds of them, pouring eastwards towards the Perak River. The majority of them were on bicycles in parties of forty or fifty, riding three or four abreast and talking and laughing just as if they were going to a football match. Indeed, some of them were actually wearing football jerseys; they seemed to have no standard uniform or equipment and were travelling as light as they possibly could. Some wore green, others grey, khaki or even dirty white. The majority had trousers hanging loose and enclosed in high boots or puttees; some had tight breeches and others shorts and rubber boots or gym shoes. ...
- Their equipment and armament were equally varied and were slung over themselves and their bicycles with no apparent method. . . . The general impression was one of extraordinary determination: they had been ordered to go to the bridgehead, and in their thousands they were going, though their equipment was second-rate and motley and much of it had obviously been commandeered in Malaya. This was certainly true of their means of transport, for we saw several parties of soldiers on foot who were systematically searching the roadside kampongs for bicycles and most of the cars and lorries bore local number plates. . . .”
- “All this was in very marked contrast to our own front-line soldiers, who were at this time equipped like Christmas trees with heavy boots, web equipment, packs, haversacks, water-bottles, blankets, ground-sheets, and even great-coats and respirators, so that they could hardly walk, much less fight.”



Chapman had trained Australian forces in guerrilla warfare and organised parties to stay behind in Japanese occupied areas.

# 14<sup>th</sup> January - Gemas

- Galleghan, inspecting the position soon after first light on the 14th, also noticed the signal wire and gave instructions for its concealment.
- Shortly before 4 p.m., a few Japanese on bicycles rounded the bend near the Gemencheh bridge. Soon a column of blithely chattering Japanese push cyclists, riding five or six abreast, was streaming over the bridge. They resembled a picnic party rather than part of an advancing army, except that they carried arms.
- Reporting by telephone to battalion headquarters that the cyclists were moving through, Duffy found that the voice at the other end of the line reached him only faintly.
- Sounds along the road forward of his position suggested that motor transport, with perhaps the main body of the enemy convoy, was following. He therefore let from 200 to 300 of the cyclists pass, to be dealt with by troops in the rear.
- As it happened, only three motor cyclists appeared, followed by several hundred more cyclists. When these were tightly packed into the ambush, and on the bridge, and it seemed to Duffy that the head of the column would have reached the Quarry road position, he gave the order for the bridge to be blown.
- The charge hurled timber, bicycles and bodies skyward.

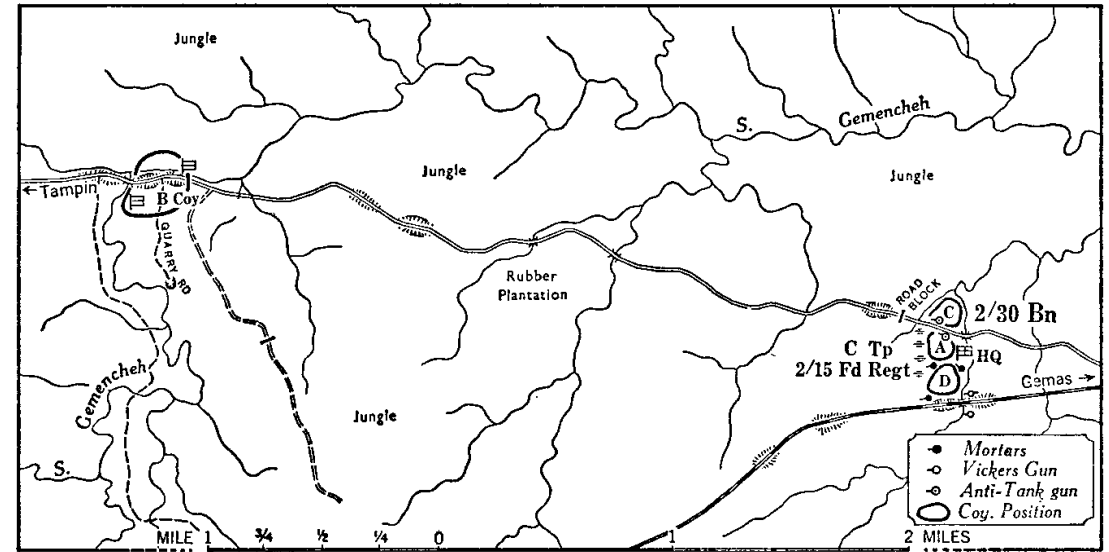


Duffy's three platoons hurled grenades among the enemy and swept them with fire from Bren guns, Tommy guns and rifles.

The din was so great that when Duffy ordered artillery fire the artillery forward observation officer thought his battery's guns were firing.

# 14<sup>th</sup> January - Gemas

- Both he and Duffy soon found, however, that their signal lines back from the ambush position had gone dead—cut, it was believed, by Japanese who had discovered them at the crucial moment in the artillery fire plan. In the absence of radios there remained no means of calling down artillery fire on the enemy troops and transport which it was assumed would bank up on the far side of the bridge.
- Battalion headquarters, straining their ears for the sound of the bridge being blown, heard nothing they could rely upon as a signal that the action had commenced, and that would indicate when and where artillery fire was required.
- The ambush had caught the Japanese completely by surprise. Their rifles were strapped to their cycles, and there was little opportunity to use either their bayonets or their grenades.

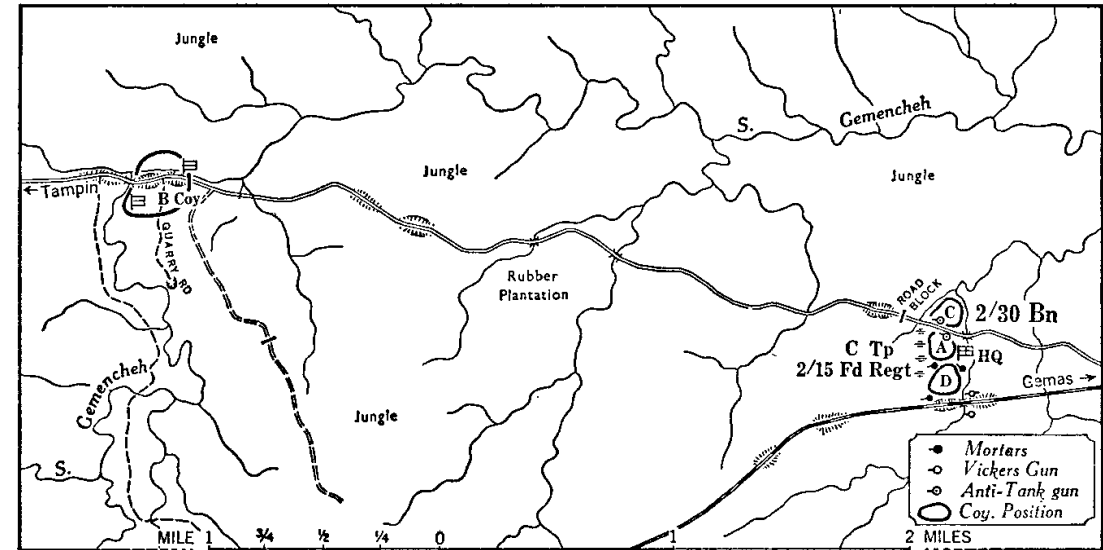


- In twenty minutes it was all over. Of the sight across the river, Duffy related: "... the entire 300 yards of road was thickly covered with dead and dying men—the result of blast when the bridge was blown up and the deadly fire of our Bren guns."



# 14<sup>th</sup> January - Gemas

- Duffy now ordered withdrawal, especially as so many Japanese had been let through the ambush before the action commenced.
- In the withdrawal Head and some of his platoon became engaged with these Japanese, who had turned back. He shot an enemy officer, but was himself wounded and had to be supported by Sergeant Doolan to the rendezvous at Quarry road.
- Geikie, who with his platoon also encountered the enemy, led several successful bayonet attacks and he too was wounded, but not badly.
- Gordon's and Garner's parties, after fighting fiercely, joined company headquarters in the jungle near Quarry road. Jones' platoon also withdrew, fighting a rearguard action.
- As it appeared that the Japanese were in strength on the trunk road, Duffy led his company in single file through the jungle in an attempt to move round the enemy's flank.
- At battalion headquarters it was realised that the signal lines to Duffy's company had been cut, and that action of some kind probably was in progress. Patrols were sent out to endeavour to restore communications.



- The patrols became involved in several clashes with enemy troops. It was discovered that the Japanese were in control of the Gemencheh ambush area (where they restored the bridge for traffic within six hours of its having been blown up) and were advancing in force, with tanks, towards the battalion's main position.



- A Japanese account (in "Malaya Campaign 1941-1942", a report captured at Lae, New Guinea, in 1943) stated that ... Artillery came forward through jungle and swamp to by-pass demolished bridges, and when the battle was over "the infantry force commander grasped the artillery force commander's hands tightly and shed tears of gratitude".



**JAPANESE TYPE 92 70 MM BATTALION GUN**

Weight 216kgs (476lbs) fired an 8 pound shell.



**BRITISH 25-POUNDER FIELD GUN/HOWITZER**



**JAPANESE TYPE 94 75 MM MOUNTAIN GUN**



### Specifications

(Ordnance QF 25-pounder Mk II on Carriage 25-pounder Mk I)

Weight 1,633 kg (3,600 lb)

Length 4.6 m (15 ft 1 in) (muzzle to towing eye)

Barrel length 2.47 m (8 ft 1 in)

Width 2.13 m (7 ft) (width at wheel hubs)

Crew 6

Shell High Explosive, Anti-Tank, Star, Chemical & Smoke

Shell weight 11.5 kg (25 lb) (HE including fuze)

Calibre 87.6 mm (3.45 in)

Breech Vertical sliding block

Recoil Hydro-pneumatic

Elevation -5° to 45°, (70° with dial sight adapter and digging trail pit or wheel mounds)

Traverse 4° Left & Right (top traverse), 360° (platform)

Rate of fire Gunfire, 6-8 rpm, Intense, 5 rpm, Rapid, 4 rpm, Normal, 3 rpm, Slow, 2 rpm, Very slow, 1 rpm

Muzzle velocity 198 - 532 m/s (649 - 1,745 ft/s)

Maximum firing range 12,253 m (13,400 yd) (HE shell)

Sights Calibrating & reciprocating

### Service history

In service 1935-1945

Used by Imperial Japanese Army

Wars Second Sino-Japanese War, World War II

### Specifications

Weight 544 kg (1,199 lb) Firing

485 kg (1,091 lb) Traveling

Length 3.81 m (12 ft 6 in) Firing (trails open)

3.89 m (12 ft 9 in) (trails closed)

3.96 m (13 ft 0 in) Traveling

Barrel length 1.56 m (5 ft 1 in) L20.8

Width 1.023 m (3 ft 4 in) Track 1.354 m (4 ft 5 in) Maximum

Height 2 ft 11 in (0.89 m)

Crew 16 to 41

Shell HE, APHE, shrapnel, incendiary, illuminating, and pointed

Calibre 75 mm (2.95 in)

Breech Horizontal sliding

Recoil Hydro-pneumatic

Carriage Split trail with demountable spade plates, and fixed trail blocks, 2 steel band tyres on spoked wheels

Elevation -10° to +45°

Traverse 40°

Rate of fire 15 rpm for 2 minutes

4 rpm for 15 minutes

2 rpm continuous

Muzzle velocity (HE) 355 m/s (1,165 ft/s)

Effective firing range(HE) 8 km (5.0 mi)

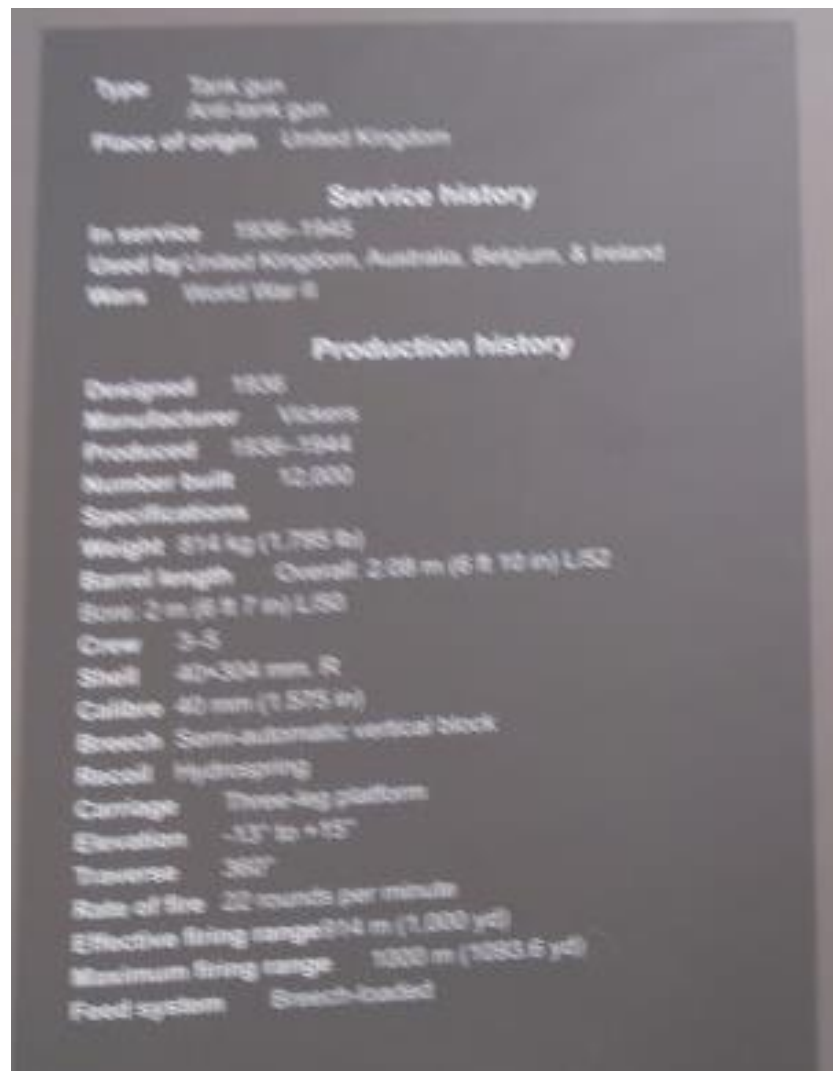
Sights Panoramic



**BRITISH ORDNANCE 2-POUNDER ANTI-TANK GUN**



**JAPANESE TYPE 94 37 MM ANTI-TANK GUN**



Weight 1,795 lbs

| Specifications         |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Weight                 | 324 kg (714 lb) approx     |
| Length                 | 2.9 m (9 ft 6 in)          |
| Barrel length          | 1.765 m (5 ft 9 in) L/46.1 |
| Width                  | 1.19 m (3 ft 11 in)        |
| Shell                  | 37×165 mm, R               |
| Calibre                | 37 mm (1.45 in)            |
| Breech                 | Sliding horizontal breech  |
| Elevation              | -10° to +25°               |
| Traverse               | 60°                        |
| Rate of fire           | 30 rpm                     |
| Muzzle velocity        | 700 m/s (2,300 ft/s)       |
| Effective firing range | 2,870 m (3,140 yd)         |
| Maximum firing range   | 4,500 m (4,900 yds)        |
| Sights                 | Straight telescopic        |

The gun could be broken down into four pack loads each weighing less than 100 kilogrammes to permit transport in four horse loads.

# 8<sup>th</sup> February – Singapore - WWKN

- The Japanese had used collapsible boats, small landing craft and pontoons for their crossings of the Strait.
- The small landing craft were brought by rail and sea along the west coast, and hand-carried in the final stages to the embarkation points to avoid detection; the collapsible boats and pontoons were mainly carried on trucks. The collapsible boats, constructed of plywood with rubber joints and built in two sections, were capable of being assembled by one man in two minutes. Propelled by a 30 horsepower 2-cylinder outboard motor, each could carry twelve fully - equipped troops with a four-man crew; linked together in threes they were capable of carrying field artillery pieces.
- Two types of pontoons were used. One, similar to but heavier in construction than the collapsible boats, was linked together in threes to carry heavy vehicles and tanks up to 16 tons.
- The other type, of steel construction, was commonly used for bridge building, but could also be used as a landing craft. Altogether 297 craft of all types (including 200 collapsible boats) were allotted for the operation.
- The Japanese were wearing compasses on their wrists to help them to find their way when they got ashore.



# Reasons for Japanese Success.

- The Japanese commanders seized the initiative and retained it by an energetic offensive.
- Command of the air and sea helped.
- Their equipment was appropriate to the environment and their planning got equipment such as the collapsible boats forward when required.
- Chapman reports that their forces were adept at living and equipping themselves off the country and also evidences energy and diligence.
- Success at night attacks like the landings on Hong Kong and Singapore Islands could not have been possible without a significant level of unconstrained initiative in the lower ranks.
- But it seems to me that a significant factor in their success was that both Japanese commanders and Japanese troops were prepared to accept a higher level of casualties before stopping their attacks than the allied forces were prepared to accept before withdrawing.

# Lt-Col Charles Anderson

- Anderson was born on 12 February 1897 in Cape Town, South Africa, to Scottish parents when Anderson was three the family moved to Nairobi in Kenya, where his father began farming. From 1907 he was sent to school in England.
- Returning to Kenya in November 1914, Anderson enlisted in the local forces. In October 1916, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the King's African Rifles. He fought with the regiment's 3rd Battalion in the East African campaign against the German colonial forces. Anderson was awarded the Military Cross and was promoted to Captain.
- Following the war Anderson farmed in Kenya.
- He married an Australian and in 1933 moved to Australia where he purchased a grazing property near Young, New South Wales. He joined the Citizens Military Forces in March 1939, being appointed to the 56th Infantry Battalion as a captain. Following the outbreak of the Second World War, Anderson was temporarily promoted to the rank of major in October 1939.
- In June 1940, he volunteered for the AIF and was appointed second in command of the 2/19 Battalion.



Lieut-Colonel C. G. W. Anderson,  
commander of the 2/19th Battalion.

# Lt-Col Charles Anderson

- Anderson was taken into captivity on 15 February 1942, when the British forces in Singapore surrendered.
- He endured the misery and squalor of being a prisoner of war, commanding “Anderson force” on the Burma–Thailand Railway. Despite a high rate of death and illness, “he maintained a high level of morale among his men”



Released prisoner of war Lieutenant Colonel Anderson (left) in Bangkok, Thailand, in September 1945.

# Lt-Col Charles Anderson

- After the war Anderson returned to his property in New South Wales.
- He entered politics in 1949, winning the Division of Hume in the House of Representatives for the Country Party, with an 18.8% swing.
- He lost his seat in the 1951 federal election and unsuccessfully stood for Hume at the subsequent 1954 election. However, he regained the seat at the 1955 election and remained in parliament until his defeat at the 1961 election.
- While in parliament Anderson served as a member of both the joint committee on the Australian Capital Territory and the joint committee on foreign affairs.
- Following his retirement from politics in 1961 Anderson moved permanently to Canberra, where he died in 1988.



# Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett

- In May 1908, just after he turned 21, Bennett volunteered to serve in the Militia, Australia's reserve military force, joining the 5th Australian Infantry Regiment as a "recruit officer".
- He continued to work as an actuary at AMP but rose in rank quickly, reaching major in 1912, at the age of 25, when he became adjutant of his regiment.
- In 1914, Bennett volunteered to serve with the AIF and was appointed second-in-command of the 6th Battalion.
- During the landing at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915, Bennett fought on the southern flank of the Anzac beachhead. He led 300 men of his battalion to an advanced position on Pine Ridge. While directing the defence of this position, Bennett was wounded in the shoulder and wrist and forced to retire to the beach for treatment. When the Turkish forces counter-attacked in the evening, the 6th Battalion force on Pine Ridge was isolated and killed to the last man, including Bennett's younger brother, Godfrey. Instead of accepting evacuation on a hospital ship, after having his wounds treated, Bennett returned to his battalion.
- At the Second Battle of Krithia Bennett was the only officer of the 6th, and one of few in the 2nd Brigade, to survive the advance unscathed. With a handful of men, he achieved the furthest advance of the attack. He became commander of the 6th Battalion the next day. Shortly afterwards, Bennett's command of the battalion was confirmed and he was promoted to lieutenant colonel.



Bennett and his headquarters staff near the Menin Road, Belgium, 20 October 1917.



# Lt Gen Gordon Bennett

- On 3 December 1916, he was given command of the 3rd Infantry Brigade and promoted to brigadier general, becoming at 29 the youngest general in the Australian Army (photo).
- He commanded the brigade for the remainder of the war, leading the brigade through actions at Bullecourt, Menin Road, and Passchendaele during 1917, and several actions against the Hindenburg Line in 1918.
- For his service on the Western Front, Bennett received a Distinguished Service Order and was mentioned in despatches a further six times.
- His attitude towards regular officers and temperament, as well as his tendency to act without clearing his actions with superiors, though, resulted in criticism from senior officers.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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# Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett

- Bennett continued to serve in the Militia. From 1921 until 1926, he served as commander of the 9th Infantry Brigade, before commanding the 2nd Division. In 1930, he was promoted major general. He was transferred to the unattached list in 1932.
- Over the ensuing years he became increasingly parochial against the small permanent Staff Corps.
- He was president of the Chamber of Manufactures of NSW between 1931 and 1933 and the Associated Chambers of Manufactures of Australia between 1933 and 1934, and was involved in several conservative political groups such as the All for Australia League and the Defence of Australia League.
- In 1937, amidst increasing tensions in Europe, he came into conflict with the Military Board after he wrote a number of newspaper articles expressing his concerns about complacent defence policy and the efficiency of regular officers.
- When World War II broke out, although only 52, Bennett was passed over for command of the Second AIF. The Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Brudenell White, seems to have been opposed to Bennett being given an active command.
- "Because of his temperament, he was considered unsuitable for a semi-diplomatic command, and one that involved subordination to British generals. Bennett was as scathing of British officers as he was of Australian regulars."

# Lt Gen Gordon Bennett

- After White's death in the Canberra air disaster in August 1940, Bennett was appointed commander of the newly formed 8th Division, replacing Vernon Sturdee, who was promoted to White's former role.
- In February 1941, the 8th Division's headquarters, along with one of its brigades – the 22nd – was posted to Malaya. The 27th Brigade was also dispatched in August.
- "Bennett's dealings with British senior officers, especially with the general officer commanding, Malaya, General Percival, were devoid of harmony."



# Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett

- Bennett was initially confident his division could stop the Japanese but the Australians only experienced some brief local success before being forced to withdraw to Singapore along with the rest of the Allied forces.
- On 15 February, Percival began surrender negotiations with the Japanese. That night, Bennett decided that it was his duty to escape from Singapore rather than surrender.
- He handed over command of the 8th Division to Brigadier Callaghan.
- With a few junior officers and some local Europeans, Bennett commandeered a sampan and crossed the Strait of Malacca to the east coast of Sumatra and reached Padang, on the west coast.
- From there Bennett flew to Java and then to Australia, arriving in Melbourne on 2 March 1942.



# Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett,

- The fall of Singapore – the largest surrender in British history – shocked Australians, resulting in the capture of almost 15,000 Australians and many more Indian and British soldiers. Nevertheless, Bennett's escape was initially regarded as praiseworthy.
- Within the military, particularly its senior echelons, Bennett was criticised for leaving his troops.
- In April 1942, he was promoted to lieutenant general and given command of III Corps in Perth. At the time, this was an important post, but by 1943, as the possibility of a Japanese invasion of Australia faded, it became a backwater.
- Bennett was told by Blamey that he would not be given another active command, and he transferred to the Reserve of Officers in May 1944.





# Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett

- He published his account of the Malayan campaign, *Why Singapore Fell*, which was critical of Percival and other British officers. Blamey unsuccessfully tried to prevent the book's publication.
- Upon retirement from active service, Bennett began writing for a Sydney newspaper and as a correspondent for the ABC.
- After the Japanese surrender, Percival wrote a letter accusing him of relinquishing his command without permission and Blamey convened a court of enquiry, which found that Bennett was not justified in handing over his command, or in leaving Singapore.
- In November 1945, Prime Minister Chifley appointed a Royal Commission. The Commission concluded that Bennett had disobeyed Percival's order to surrender.
- “While never questioning Bennett's personal courage, the Commission concluded that his action had been unjustified. Bennett's stated reason for leaving Singapore was that he had learned how to defeat the Japanese (but had been let down by British and Indian troops) and he was obliged to communicate his knowledge to military authorities. Yet, he had proved no more proficient than other commanders in Malaya and his tactics were outdated. Just as important to him was his wish to lead the Australian army, a consuming aspiration which had been sharpened by not being given an early command. His prejudice against regular officers and his ambition clouded his professional judgement at the most important point in his career. When his most cherished goals were in tatters, he convinced himself that blame for his failure lay with others.”