

Australia's War: 80 years ago this week

10 March 1941



Ketty Brovig

- There was a discrepancy about the Ketty Brovig identified last week.
- The COIC report dated 7th March has the ship captured by a pocket battleship.
- The Navy Official History says:
- In January the raider Atlantis, which had been refitting at Kerguelen Island far to the south, began operations off East Africa, working westward roughly on the latitude of Mombasa. East of the Seychelles she sank the British Mandasor on the 24th January, and westward of those islands captured the British Speybank (dispatched as a prison ship to Germany) on the 31st, and the Norwegian tanker Ketty Brovig (retained as an oiler for raiders) on the 2nd February.

TO: THE DIRECTOR OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE.

WEEK END. 7th. March. 1941.

COMBINED OPERATIONAL-INTELLIGENCE CENTRE.

DIARY OF OPERATIONAL-INTELLIGENCE

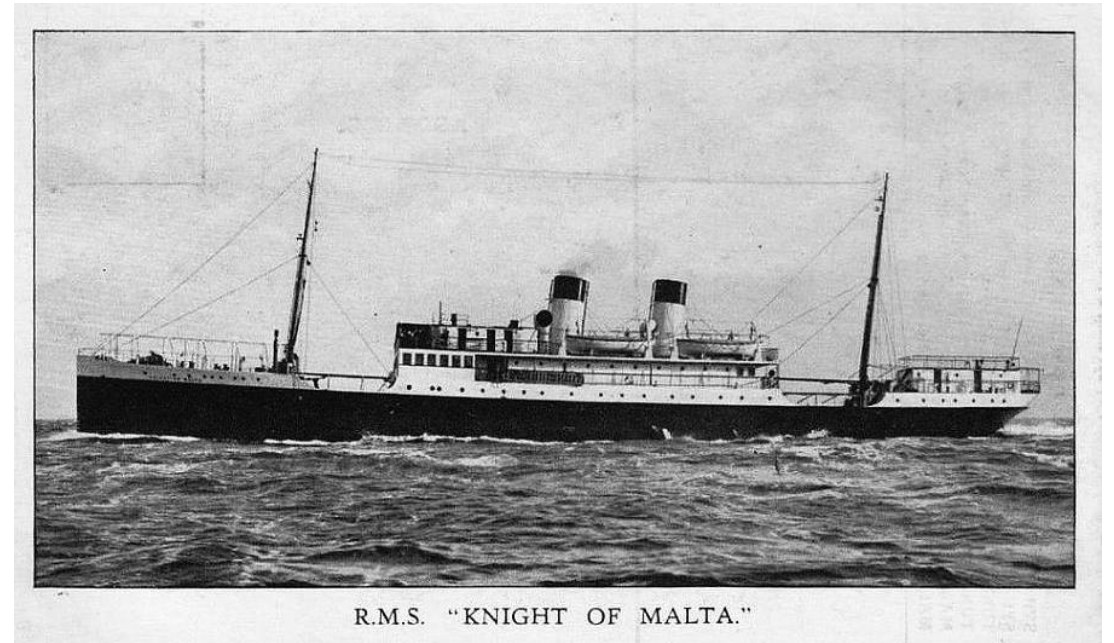
DATE OF EVENT	NATURE OF REPORT	ACTION TAKEN
	was on course for S.A. cancelled owing to minor defect.	
3/3/41	Submarine report. Archerfield reported that an instructor Sergeant and his pupil from Amberley sighted an object taken to be a submarine 3 1/2 miles from Cartright Point. Object submerged. Bubbles seen. Search by one aircraft from Archerfield. Time of sighting 0640Z/3.	Air search conducted. Report negative. Graded C4. No further action.
4/3/41	Further report of submarine sighting near Mudjimba Is. (3 miles north of Cartright Point) at 1102K/4th. Report stated that 2 pupils in an Anson observed disturbance in water, on investigating they noticed slimy substance on surface.	Air search by Hudson result negative. Appreciation of reports given a D grading.
4/3/41	Report of unidentified aircraft outside Sydney Heads at 0900K/4th. Aircraft detected by sound detector and later sighted from Dover Heights.	Later identified as a Wirraway.
5/3/41	Townsville 0600K/5. Four men on beach report seeing rockets fired about 40 miles out to sea, from Mackay bearing about 90° from Flat top Island time 2300K/4.	Hudson aircraft carried out extensive search round ocean 0545K to 1000K. All vessels identified. Air search negative.
5/3/41	"CANBERRA" and "LEANDER" sighted one merchant ship and one tanker in position 8°40'S 61°25'E at 1205Z/4. Tanker was Norwegian "KETTY BROVIC" and ship German "COBURG" which left Massawa 21st February. KETTY BROVIC captured by Pocket Battleship 2nd February. Both ships were sunk.	
6/3/41	Airintel, Townsville report that two additional men saw rockets 6, at 1 minute and 6 at 1 minute intervals.	

10 March 1941 - Egypt

- Blamey sent the following cable from Alexandria on the 10th:
- British Forces immediately available consist of the 6th Australian Division, 7th Australian Division, New Zealand Division, one Armoured Brigade and ancillary troops. 7th Australian Division and the New Zealand Division have not been trained as complete divisions. Available later at unknown date one armoured division. Practically no other troops in the Middle East not fully engaged. Arrival of other formations from overseas indefinite owing to shipping difficulties. Movement now under orders will be completed probably in two months.
- The Germans have as many divisions available as roads can carry and capacity can be greatly increased in two months. It is certain that within three or four months we must be prepared to meet overwhelming forces completely equipped and trained.
- Greek forces inadequate in numbers and equipment to deal with the first irruptions of the strong German Army.
- Air forces available 23 squadrons. German Air Force within close striking range of the proposed theatre of operations and large air force can be brought to bear early in the summer. In view of the Germans' much proclaimed intention to drive us off the continent wherever we appear, landing of this small British force would be most welcome to them as it gives good reason to attack.
- The factors to be weighed are for:
 - (a) The effect of failure to reinforce Greece on opinion in Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece; and against
 - (b) The effect of defeat and second evacuation if such be possible on opinion of the same countries and Japan.
- Military operation extremely hazardous in view of the disparity between opposing forces in numbers and training .

10 March 1941 - Mediterranean

- The cargo ship Knight of Malta (1,553 GRT, 1929) had run aground in the Mediterranean Sea 2 nautical miles west of Ras Azzaz, Egypt on 3 March. There were no casualties.
- Salvage efforts were abandoned on 10 March following air attacks on the ships involved in the salvage works.



Built for the passenger & mail service between Valetta and Syracuse. Accommodation for 63 x 1st Class & 30 x 2nd Class passengers
07/1940: Requisitioned by Admiralty as an armed boarding vessel, later stores carrier
02/03/1941: Wrecked 2 miles from Raz Azzaz, Libya
On a voyage from Alexandria to Tobruk carrying troops. No casualties

10 March 1941 - Brisbane

Nazis Warn Vichy About Syria

LONDON, March 10.—A warning to Vichy that the population of Syria favours General de Gaulle, Free French leader, and General Catroux, his commander in the Middle East, more and more comes from the Munich newspaper, Neueste Nachrichten.

The Nazi paper blames the activities of British agents for this state of affairs and accuses Vichy of suppression of all news confirming it.

"It is a common secret that public opinion in Syria has created a dangerous situation and has made necessary consultations between General Weygand and Marshal Petain," it declares.

"All the news received from Syria shows that Vichy must soon reach decisions. We think it necessary to warn Vichy to refrain from actions which would involve dangerous consequences and responsibilities for the French Government."—A.A.P.

P. 5: Axis Promises To Moslems

THAI WAR PACT EXPECTED SOON

TOKIO, March 10.—An agreement settling the Thai-Indo China border war is expected to be initialled in Tokio soon.

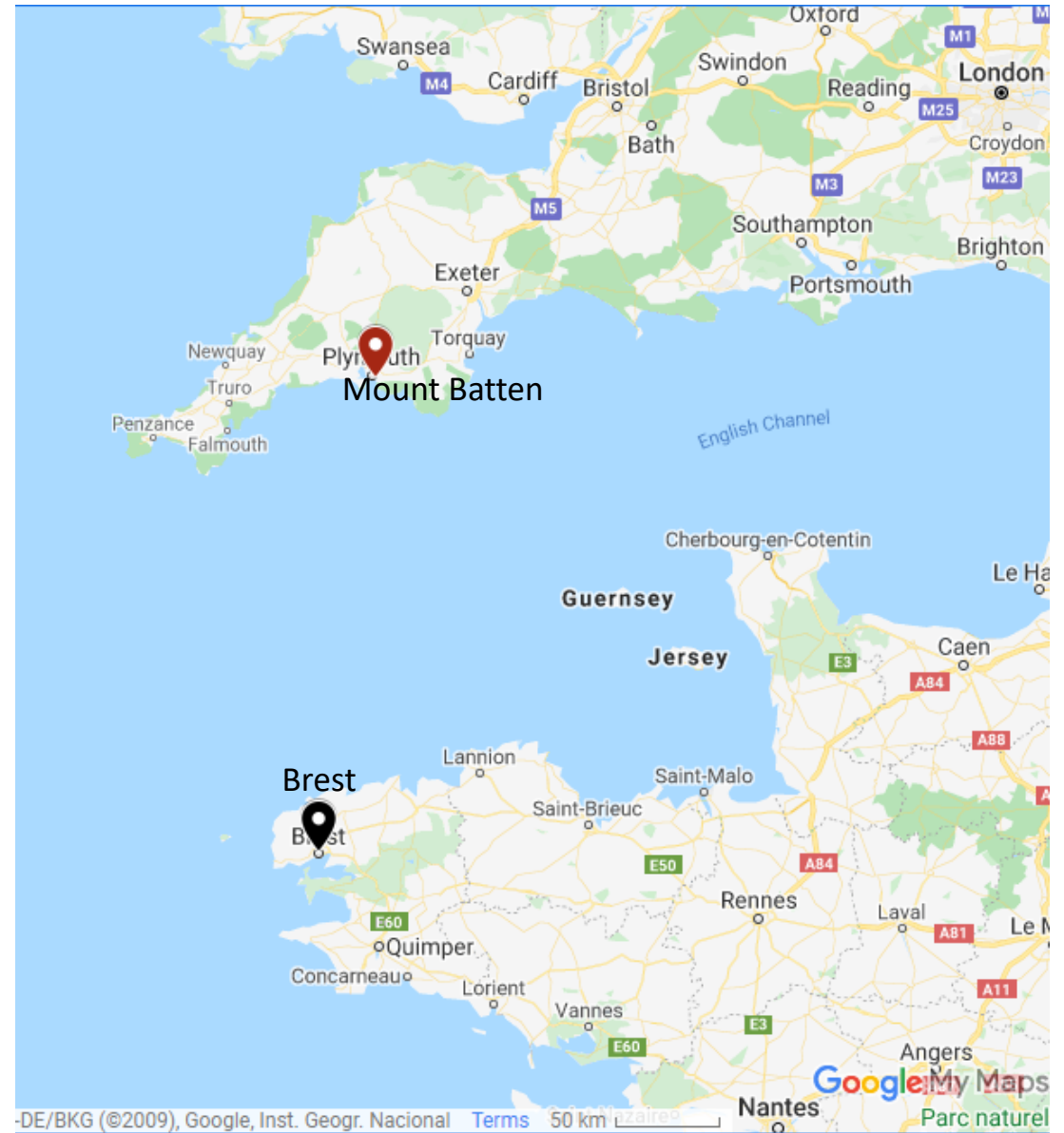
The French Ambassador to Tokio (M. Arsene-Henri) visited the Japanese Foreign Minister (Mr. Matsuoka) to-day and delivered the Vichy Government's final instructions.

It is authoritatively stated in Saigon that there are now 400 Japanese bombers in Tongking.

The French Indo China Press, for the first time, advocated to-day the surrender to Thailand of the disputed territories. Authoritative quarters in Saigon ridiculed Thai claims that the French had violated the armistice. They said that unimportant fighting occurred at one place on the frontier

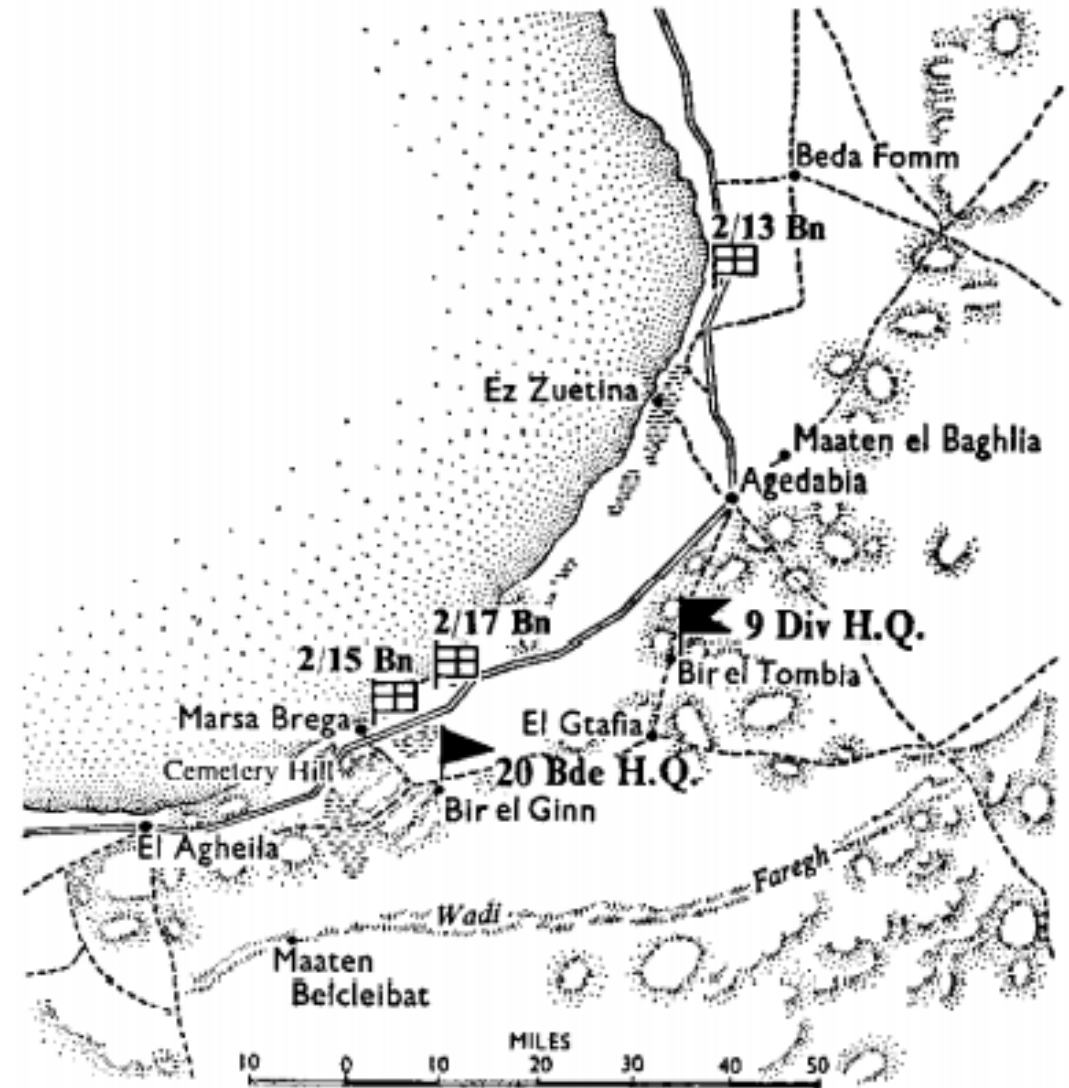
11 March 1941 - Atlantic

- No 10 Squadron RAAF were next required to renew the blockading patrol of Brest, as the cruiser Hipper was again apparently preparing to sail, and five sorties were flown on this duty between 11th and 16th March.
- The ship was not found and enemy aircraft seen during these patrols made no attacks.



11 March 1941 - Libya

- On 11th March 9th Division headquarters arrived at Bir el Tombia to relieve 6th Division headquarters, and command passed to the 9th Division on the 12th.
- But when the relief was completed Morshead had in Cyrenaica only one of his infantry brigades; the other two were still in Palestine.
- Some units did not share in the general relief of the 6th Division:
 - The 16th Anti Tank Company remained to give support to the foremost troops.
 - The 2/1st Pioneer Battalion was another unit to remain: its headquarters were at Derna with companies engaged in engineering and repair work throughout Cyrenaica, at Benghazi, Tmimi, the Wadi Cuff and Tobruk.



11th March 1941

11 March 1941 - Libya

- Wavell's estimate at that time, "was that Italians in Tripolitania could be disregarded and that the Germans were unlikely to accept the risk of sending large bodies of armoured troops to Africa in view of the inefficiency of the Italian Navy."
- Wavell was short of an effective intelligence service.
 - The increasing superiority of the German Air Force in the region severely hampered British air reconnaissance.
 - Intelligence from Tripolitania had been regarded as a responsibility of the French in Tunisia until the collapse of France, so the British had no network of agents before hostilities opened.
- Wavell told the Chiefs of Staff in early March that the latest information indicated that two Italian infantry divisions, two Italian motorised artillery regiments and German armoured troops estimated at a maximum of one armoured brigade group had recently arrived in Tripolitania.
- Wavell's comment was: Tripoli to Agheila is 471 miles and to Benghazi 646 miles. There is only one road, and water is inadequate over 410 miles of the distance; these factors, together with lack of transport, limit the present enemy threat.



11 March 1941 - Libya

- About this time Wavell learned that his opponent was General Rommel, a fairly junior commander with, however, an impressive record as a tactician in both infantry and armoured warfare.
- British Intelligence knew the outline of his military career.



Rommel and staff during the Battle of France, June 1940

11 March 1941 - Libya

- During World War I, Rommel fought in France as well as in the Romanian (notably at the Second Battle of the Jiu Valley) and Italian campaigns.
- Rommel's Mountain Battalion was assigned to the Isonzo front, in a mountainous area in Italy.
- The offensive, known as the Battle of Caporetto, began on 24 October 1917. Rommel's force, consisting of three rifle companies and a machine gun unit, was part of an attempt to take enemy positions on three mountains: Kolovrat, Matajur, and Stol.
- In two and a half days, from 25 to 27 October, Rommel and his 150 men captured 81 guns and 9,000 men (including 150 officers), at the loss of six dead and 30 wounded.
- Rommel achieved this remarkable success by taking advantage of the terrain to outflank the Italian forces, attacking from unexpected directions or behind enemy lines, and taking the initiative to attack when he had orders to the contrary and when the odds seemed to favour the Italians. The drive to keep himself and his men moving fast over mountainous terrain without sleep was also a critical element of this success.
- In this battle, Rommel helped pioneer infiltration tactics, a new form of maneuver warfare just being adopted by German armies, and later by foreign armies, and described by some as Blitzkrieg without tanks.
- Acting as advance guard in the capture of Longarone on 9 November, Rommel again decided to attack with a much smaller force. Convinced that they were surrounded by an entire German division, the 1st Italian Infantry Division – 10,000 men – surrendered to Rommel.
- For this and his actions at Matajur, he received the order of Pour le Mérite the highest decoration of the German Empire.
- In January 1918, Rommel was promoted to Hauptmann (captain) a rank he was to hold for the next 15 years.



Rommel

- “War makes extremely heavy demands on the soldier’s strength and nerves. For this reason, make heavy demands on your men in peacetime exercises.”
- **Erwin Rommel, [Infantry Attacks](#), 1937**
- In September 1935 Rommel was moved to the War Academy at Potsdam as an instructor, for the next three years. His book *Infanterie greift an* (Infantry Attacks), a description of his wartime experiences along with his analysis, was published in 1937. It became a bestseller, which, it has been said "enormously influenced" many armies of the world; Adolf Hitler was one of many people who owned a copy.
- In October 1938 Hitler specially requested that Rommel be seconded to command the Führerbegleitbatallion (his escort battalion). This unit accompanied Hitler whenever he travelled outside Germany. During this period Rommel indulged his interest in engineering and mechanics by learning about the inner workings and maintenance of internal combustion engines and heavy machine guns.
- Following the campaign in Poland, Rommel began lobbying for command of one of Germany's panzer divisions, of which there were then only ten. Rommel obtained the command of the 7th Panzer Division despite having been earlier turned down by the army's personnel office. His appointment has been ascribed to the support of Hitler, List and Guderian.
- The 7th Panzer had been one of the leading divisions in the drive over the Meuse to the Channel that cut off the Northern Allied armies. Rommel drove his men on, appropriating the bridging train of another division, ignoring enemy forces on his flanks and orders from his superiors to pause and consolidate.

Wavell

- Wavell's headmaster at Winchester had advised his father that there was no need to send him into the Army as he had "sufficient ability to make his way in other walks of life".
- Wavell was commissioned in May 1901 as a second lieutenant in the Black Watch, and joined his regiment in South Africa to fight in the Second Boer War. He stayed in South Africa throughout the war, which ended in June 1902.
- In 1903 he joined his battalion in India and fought in the Bazar Valley Campaign, a brief punitive expedition on the North West Frontier.
- After a year at the Staff College, in 1911, he spent a year as a military observer with the Russian Army to learn Russian.
- Wavell was working as a staff officer when the First World War began and was sent to France to GHQ of the BEF.
- In November 1914, he was appointed brigade major of 9th Infantry Brigade. He was wounded in the Second Battle of Ypres of 1915, losing his left eye and winning the Military Cross.
- After recovering he spent the rest of the war in staff positions including as a liaison officer with the Russian army in the Caucasus and as liaison officer with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force headquarters.
- Between the wars he alternated between staff and command appointments successively commanding a brigade, a division, Palestine, southern command and from July 1939 the Middle East.



Wavell

- Based on lectures delivered in 1939, originally published in 1941.
- [Generals And Generalship: Wavell, Archibald, Dill, John: 9781163184745: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/Generals-And-Generalship-Wavell-Archibald-Dill/dp/9781163184745)
- “Behind an inarticulate and ruggedly orthodox exterior Wavell concealed one of the most fertile minds ever possessed by a British senior officer.”
- Howard. M. (1990). British Intelligence in the Second World War. Vol V (Strategic Deception). HMSO. p. 32. ISBN 0-521-40145-3.
- Others have described him as taciturn, which seems to me closer to the truth than inarticulate.



Wavell

- In September 1943 Wavell was appointed Viceroy of India.
- One of his first actions in office was to address the Bengal famine of 1943 by ordering the army to distribute relief supplies to the starving rural Bengalis. He attempted with mixed success to increase the supplies of rice to reduce the prices.
- During his reign, Gandhi was leading the Quit India campaign, Mohammad Ali Jinnah was working for an independent state for the Muslims, Subhas Chandra Bose befriended Japan and Churchill resisted any discussion of Indian independence.
- At the end of the war, rising Indian expectations continued to be unfulfilled, and inter-communal violence increased. Eventually, in 1947, Attlee lost confidence in Wavell and replaced him with Mountbatten.
- While Viceroy of India he compiled and annotated an anthology of great poetry, *Other Men's Flowers*, which was published in 1944. He wrote the last poem in the anthology himself and described it as a "...little wayside dandelion of my own"



11 March 1941 - Egypt

- Wooten's brigade and the 6th Cavalry were to form part of the force to go to Greece, and General Wavell decided to capture Giarabub in order to free them for their new role.
- Wooten, who had taken over from Morshead when he was promoted to command 9th Division, had received his instructions from Generals Blamey and O'Connor on 10th and 11th March.
- The amount of transport available limited his force to one battalion plus one company, with enough supplies to last ten days. The operation must be carried through successfully in that time.



11 March 1941 - Egypt

- O'Connor informed Wootten that no tanks would be available and artillery ammunition and petrol would be limited (another consequence of the shortage of vehicles).
- When Wootten asked whether there would be air cooperation or support, O'Connor replied: "Please don't ask me for any planes. I have only two Wellington bombers with which to prevent Rommel bringing his reinforcing units and supplies into Tripoli. If I give you one, I will have only one left.
- Wootten had to complete the task and bring the detachment back to Mersa Matruh by 25th March.



Wootten photographed as a Major General in 1945.

11 March 1941 - Washington

- The Lend-Lease Bill, which allowed Britain to obtain the supplies needed from the US without payment, was signed into law on 11th March and the President spoke of "the end of compromise with tyranny" and promised aid until victory.
- Lend-Lease also provided supplies to China, but they were limited by the delivery capacity of the Burma road.



CANOTE was an Optimist—

IT IS EASY TO BE AN OPTIMIST. BUT IT IS NOT EASY TO BE A PESSIMIST. THE ONLY WAY TO BE A PESSIMIST IS TO BE A MAN WHO HAS BEEN THROUGH THE FIRE AND COMES OUT WITH A SCAR.

CHAS. SANKEY FRASER
301 Queen St. North, Sydney, N.S.W.
at 100 Market St., Melbourne.

FORECAST:—Cloudy at Times. Map, Page 10.

The Courier-Mail

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ANGLO-FRENCH CLASH



Admiral Darlan, Vichy Vice-Primer, who has threatened to seize French warships to prevent hostilities in France, regards the role of British naval forces.

IS NAZI AIM Vichy's Threat Causes Worry

Courier-Mail Special Service and Australian Associated Press

BRITAIN believes that Hitler is trying to force an incident between the British and French navies as a pretext for seizing the French Fleet.

To gain his object, he induced the Vichy Vice-Primer, Admiral Darlan, to threaten to order French warships to convoy foodships to France "if the British continue their seizures and sinkings."

There is a strong demand in Britain that the Vichy Government should come out into the open and say whether it is for or against Germany. The situation is becoming intolerable for Britain.

In Washington there is a grave fear that Darlan's threat will lead to war between Britain and Japan.

Could between the German occupation and the British blockade, France is being rebelliously pushed against her will toward conflict with Britain, declares the Vichy correspondent of the New York Times.

The Vichy Government is making more and more hostile overtures, whereas French public opinion continues to yearn toward Britain, it is pointed out in London.

When the British navy is not to be taken into consideration, the German navy is the only one that can be taken into consideration to intervene and act in the Mediterranean, says the New York Times.

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GREEK WAR COUNCIL



Axis Furious As Roosevelt Acts

Courier-Mail Special Service and Australian Associated Press

FURY and gloom are expressed in the German, Italian, and Japanese press as President Roosevelt plans aid to Britain on a scale dwarfing earlier efforts.

With the passage of the Lend-Lease Bill, announced, President Roosevelt has decided to make a series of conferences at the White House in Washington.

It is expected that Washington will send a message to the British government, and that the British government will send a message to the United States government.

The German press is furious at the Lend-Lease Bill, and the Japanese press is furious at the Lend-Lease Bill.

FRANCE

CEDES PART OF EMPIRE

Thailand Gains

Courier-Mail Special Service and Australian Associated Press

France and Thailand yesterday accepted Japan's plan of mediation in the Thai-Lao-China frontier "war."

The Vichy Government has signed a decree, as a result of Japanese pressure, a considerable portion of French Indo-China.

It is stated that it was announced in Tokyo that the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Hirota, would have on Wednesday the British and Americans would be asked to accept the Japanese plan.

The French and Thai danger in Thailand has been increased by the signing of the agreement.

A local communique issued in Tokyo revealed that the final agreement was signed after modifications of the original Japanese plan.

Areas Ceded

By the terms of the French-Thai agreement in Thailand—
1. The district of Phibun.
2. The district of Phibun.

The district of Phibun is the boundary between the provinces of Siam and Thailand.

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Thailand, Thai territory, the United States and British for the Lend-Lease Act.

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Censure Move Rejected By Labour Party

CANBERRA, Tuesday.—Representatives of an informal political group in the coalition Government of the Federal Government, including the Prime Minister, Mr. Robert Menzies, were yesterday in the House of Representatives to discuss the possibility of an attack on the Government.

The move to censure the Government was rejected by the Labour Party.

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WHAT DARLAN SAID

Admiral Darlan, Vichy Vice-Primer, who has threatened to seize French warships to prevent hostilities in France, regards the role of British naval forces.

13-15 March 1941 - Mediterranean

- On 13–15 March the transit camp at Amiriya had heavy rain and then a memorable sandstorm that stopped the movement of all vehicles on the desert road between Cairo and Alexandria.
- The second flight of the New Zealand Division which was at sea during 9–17 March consequently saw the Mediterranean at its worst.
- The Greek steamer Hellas, with Headquarters Divisional Engineers on board, was hove-to for a day; the Ionia, with 4 Field Ambulance and 19 Army Troops Company, had her holds battened down and was hard put to it to make two knots; the Marit Maersk with 19 Battalion drifted out of the convoy, was hove-to south of Crete and forced to put in to Suda Bay before she could go on to Piræus.
- Some units enjoyed the comparative luxury of travel on the fast cruisers, but others had to endure a slow crossing on small cargo vessels that came through after the Canal was cleared. They had not been built for such a ferry service. 'Deck dwellers peered down the hatch at men, mess gear and packs pressed together in the holds, where past passengers—sheep—had left their trademark, and where the smelly air was hot and stifling.' The messing facilities were naturally very limited, the ships' galleys providing tea and the men eating tinned meat and army biscuits.
- All flights received a Special Order of the Day from General Freyberg, which was to be opened after the ships were out of the harbour. Through it the men were told that they would be fighting in Greece against Germans; they were warned that they must steel themselves to accept the noise and confusion of modern warfare; and they were reminded that the honour of the Dominion was in their hands.
- The Greeks, who had not expected the arrival of a British expeditionary force, were wildly excited. The excited people along the highway and the crowds in the streets of Athens gave all the successive flights—a spontaneous and tumultuous welcome as they went through to the staging areas outside the city. Kifisia, a summer resort on the lower slopes of Mount Pendelicon, had been reserved for the artillery regiments. The infantry brigades, each in its turn, encamped in the pine plantations on the western slopes of Mount Hymettus.

13 March 1941 - Libya

- On 13th March Lieutenant MacDonald of the 2/15th Battalion, with a sergeant and eight men and an escort of two armoured cars from the King's Dragoon Guards, travelled about 45 miles into the desert and patrolled the south-western approaches to El Agheila. Although they met no enemy they saw trails left by reconnoitring tanks.
- Australian engineer patrols of the 2/3rd Field Company led by Lieutenant Bamgarten which were reconnoitring for water to the south-west deep into the desert, even beyond Marada , brought back similar reports.

13 March 1941 - Libya

- Morshead knew that in the estimation of Wavell's headquarters it was probable that a complete German armoured brigade had arrived in Tripolitania, including a regiment of tanks (at least 150 tanks, probably 240), and that it was thought new arrivals might possibly bring the German formation up to the strength of a complete armoured division. Middle East headquarters forecast that the enemy was likely to initiate an early offensive reconnaissance against El Agheila and seize it, if he found the opposition weak.
- Morshead's own strength near the frontier was a light-tank regiment, an armoured car regiment, and an infantry brigade, with another tank battalion in process of equipping itself with captured Italian tanks of doubtful value. There were only 15 anti-tank guns (nine 2-pounders and six Bredas) and 19 light anti-aircraft guns (16 Bofors and 3 Bredas) in the whole frontier region.
- The vital defile west of El Agheila had not been secured nor were any ground troops holding El Agheila itself. Major Lindsay of the King's Dragoon Guards took an armoured car patrol up to the fort at El Agheila each morning at first light but retired at dusk.

15 March 1941 – North Sea

- Wing Commander Curnow, newly arrived from Australia, assumed command of a Coastal Command unit, No. 224 Squadron R.A.F. on 15th March.
- 224 was an anti submarine unit flying Hudsons from RAF Leuchars on the East coast of Scotland.
- Gp Capt T. C. Curnow. Comd 23 Sqn 1939, 2 EFTS 1939-40, 5 EFTS 1940-41, 224 Sqn RAF 1941-42; SASO HQ North-Eastern Area 1943; comd 5 SFTS 1943-45; SASO 11 Gp 1945. Regular air force offr; of Brisbane; b. Ballarat, Vic, 7 Aug 1911.



Securing bombs in a 224 Squadron Hudson at RAF Leuchars

15 March 1941 – Red Sea

- The other three ships of US 9 carried AIF and NZ troops for the Middle East. They were trans-shipped at Bombay, passed Aden on the 5th and reached Suez on 15 Mar 1941 in Nevasa, Khedive Ismail, Westernland, Slamet, and Cap St Jacques. Parramatta formed part of their Red Sea escort.
- Yarra left the Red Sea in the middle of March for Bombay, where she docked and refitted.

15 March 1941 - Melbourne

- It was becoming evident to the Air Board that it would not be long before there was a shortage of men. Establishment of a women's auxiliary for the R.A.A.F. was then proposed based on the British model.
- On 12th December 1940, the War Cabinet approved the formation of a women's auxiliary, subject to the approval of the Advisory War Council and to proof that the required number of male telegraphists were not available for the air force.
- Mr Fairbairn's successor as Minister for Air, Mr McEwen, made it very clear that he did not favour the enlistment of women in the air force unless it was unavoidable, but unavoidable it became, as he admitted in January when all efforts to obtain sufficient male telegraphists had failed.
- In the face of great difficulties and marked lack of enthusiasm on the part of some male officers the recruiting of airwomen began on 15th March. Enrolment was for a period not exceeding 12 months, which might be extended, and pay would be at the rate of approximately two-thirds of the rates for the corresponding ranks of airmen.
- On 25th March McEwen, in the House of Representatives, announced the formation of the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force.
- Mr Makin replied for the Opposition, raising a series of objections which included the opinion that young men from technical schools could fill the vacancies in the Service for which women were now to be enlisted; that the formation of the W.A.A.A.F. would create a precedent for the army; that the Opposition disapproved of this means of securing "cheap labour" (rates of pay should be equal to those for men); that establishment of the auxiliary would enable the Government to send men overseas (to which the Opposition objected), and that "the air force was a man's job, anyway" .

16 March 1941 - Libya

- Wootten decided that the first necessity was to examine the marshy area south of Giarabub to discover whether an attacking force could cross the depression and attack Giarabub from the south in the area west of the frontier wire, between the depression and the Sand Sea. He preferred this to a thrust from the north where the Italians expected attack and where they held posts arranged in depth up to 5,000 to 6,000 yards north of the town.
- On 16th March, he ordered Abbott to examine the country south of the marshy depression through which Wootten proposed to attack.
- Brown's squadron drove across the swamp that night using a track which it had found a little to the east of El Hamra and thence, at 5 a.m., moved south-west on an Italian post at a building which it named "Wootten House". It was unoccupied, but at 8.30 a.m. two Italian trucks appeared in the north, evidently containing a party which normally occupied Wootten House by day.
- The cavalymen opened fire, killing two Italians and capturing fifteen, including two officers, one of whom described the Italian position and indicated the site of each gun.
- From Wootten's the cavalry advanced northwards towards "Daly House" (after Wootten's brigade major), a post about 5,000 yards south-east of the town.
- Here they came under fire from some forty Italians with an anti-tank gun and machine-guns. Lieutenant Wade's troop advanced, drove off the Italians and occupied the area. At 1.50, the cavalymen withdrew, having accomplished their task: the crossing of the swamp and the examination of the track leading into Giarabub from the south.

16 March 1941 - Libya

- Although the plans of Cyrenaica Command prescribed only delaying actions at Marsa Brega as a prelude to giving battle on the plains before Antelat, Morshead believed that the El Agheila defile was the key to the defence.
- When he visited the 2/17th Battalion on 16th March, he expressed the opinion that the forward infantry were too far from the enemy. He was also very worried that means were not available to prevent encirclement of his battalions, nor to move them if threatened with encirclement.



- Thanks for your attention