

# Australia's War: 80 years ago this week

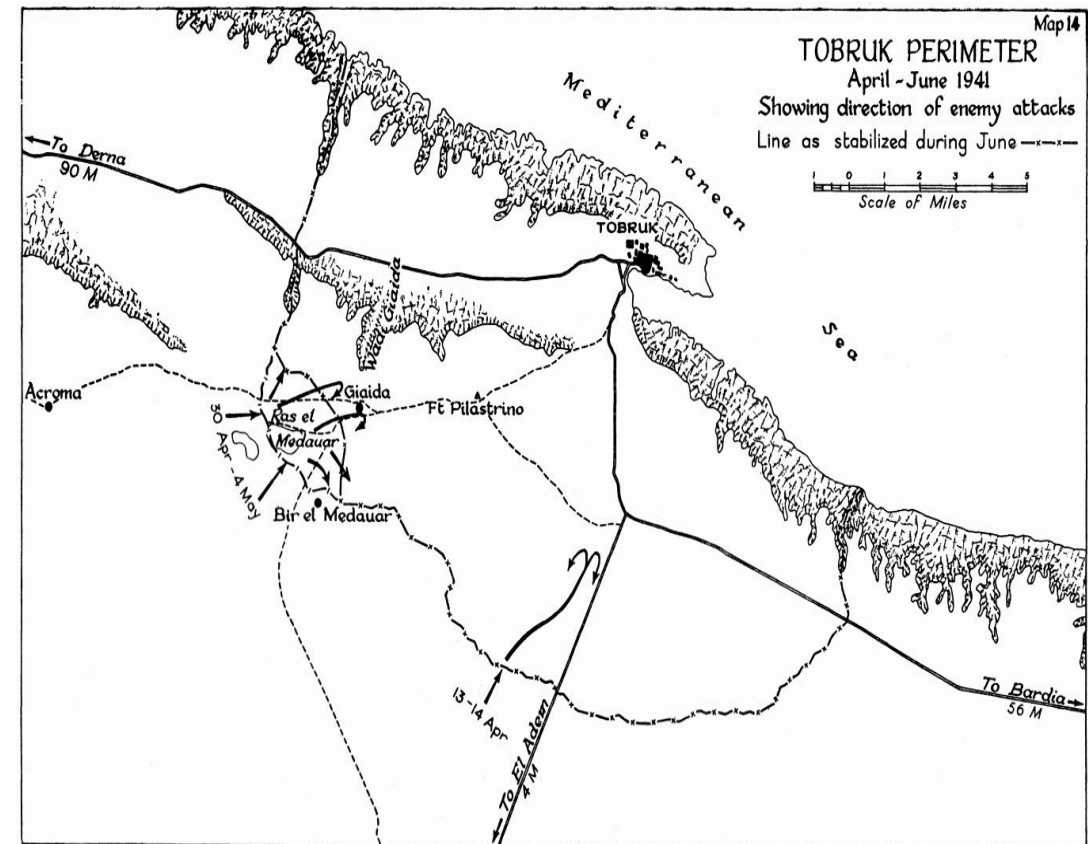
## 16 June 1941



- 16 June to 6 July 1941

# 16 June 1941 - Libya

- Morshead's prescription to counter the disappointment at the failure of efforts to relieve Tobruk was hard work. The construction of field works giving depth to the defence by units in reserve was intensified. In the front line active patrolling and raids were encouraged still further.
- In June there were 134 bombing raids on the fortress, in addition to 39 reconnaissance flights.
- In the hope that the siege would be raised, little but the barest essentials had been shipped to Tobruk in the weeks preceding BATTLEAXE. No fresh meat was received in June. In May, according to transportation records, 112 tons had been received, but there is no record of its consumption except in hospitals.
- One battalion commander wrote in the unit war diary for June:
- The spirit of the battalion is still good and the defences of its section of Tobruk are as secure as ever. But a calculating outlook has definitely crept in as regards the "joie de vivre" of raiding. I expect this will grow unless some event takes place to change our outlook.
- In the month ending 24th June the R.A.P. of one unit treated 360 cases of diarrhoea, 26 of dysentery and 16 of "fear state". There was, moreover, in all units, a number of men—particularly among officers and N.C.Os who did not report from front-line duty for treatment of gastro-enteric disorders



# 16 June 1941 - Egypt

- Units evacuated from Crete were rehabilitated. The Maori Battalion's experience may be typical.
- Two days were spent in the issue of essential kit, in drawing pay and in writing letters home, after which the battalion entrained for Helwan, where trucks met and took it to its tented area at nearby Garawi. Already in camp there were a number of men who had found their way back to Egypt direct from Greece or who had been discharged from hospital and convalescent camps.
- The battalion was issued with summer kit and, after a muster parade on which Colonel Dittmer warned the Maoris that they must live up to the good name won in Greece and Crete, departed on seven days' 'Survivors' Leave'.
- On Sunday, 15 June Padre Harawira conducted a special church parade in memory of the fallen and to offer thanks for a safe deliverance. The men sang the funeral hymn followed, in accordance with Maori custom, with a hangi lunch.
- Eleven officers and 240 men were marched in, mainly from the 5th Reinforcements, but there was also a continuous movement to and from schools of instruction and a continuous shuffling of men to and from specialist platoons.
- The first ceremonial parade of the reorganised battalion was witnessed by the King and Queen of Greece and General Freyberg. The day concluded with an entertainment for the visitors provided by two haka parties.

# 16 June 1941 - Mediterranean

- Two French destroyers of the Cassard class attempted to reinforce their forces from the west.
- Admiral Darlan had requested permission from the Germans and Italians to send the ships via a radio message which the British decoded and alerted them to the ship's mission and route.
- One, Le Chevalier Paul, was torpedoed and sunk, by Fleet Air Arm Swordfish aircraft from Cyprus, north of Rouad Island (off the Syrian coast between Tripoli and Latakia) on the 16th June.
- The other succeeded in reaching Beirut under strong air escort on the 21st.



The French destroyer Chevalier Paul moored to a buoy, circa 1934-1935.

# 17 June 1941 - Egypt

- The Australian Government had been very concerned to discover that the 7th Division's cavalry regiment was in Cyprus.
- This disposition had been made without General Blamey's knowledge while he was in Greece; nor had the Australian Government been informed.
- In a cable on 13th June Menzies reminded Blamey of the importance attached by the Government to the principle that A.I.F. units should serve in their own formations in the Australian Corps under Australian command.
- Blamey immediately referred this to Wavell, who agreed to arrange the earliest possible relief of the Australian unit.
- On 17th June Blamey followed up with a memorandum referring to 10 other A.I.F. units (not including units serving in Tobruk) distributed in commands other than Australian and requested their return to A.I.F. formations.
- The staff of GHQ promptly made plans for the relief of these units.



General Blamey outside a soldiers' club in Palestine.

# 18 June 1941 - Batavia

- After the Netherlands were occupied by the Germans, Japanese economic delegations visited Batavia and pressed for access to more oil and larger immigration quotas. After many weeks of discussion they were refused, and negotiations were finally broken off on the 18th June 1941.





# 20 June 1941 - Syria

- General Evetts summoned Blackburn to his headquarters at Rosh Pinna and gave him orders to assist the Free French forward to Damascus. Blackburn, whose "battalion" (2/3<sup>rd</sup> Machine Gun) comprised one company (Captain Gordon's), one platoon of another company and five anti-tank guns, advanced to Colonel Casseau's Free French force at the Jebel el Kelb.
- The Free French troops were very weary after eleven days of fighting in the heat and sand and had come to a standstill; the Vichy force had tanks and armoured cars and they had none.

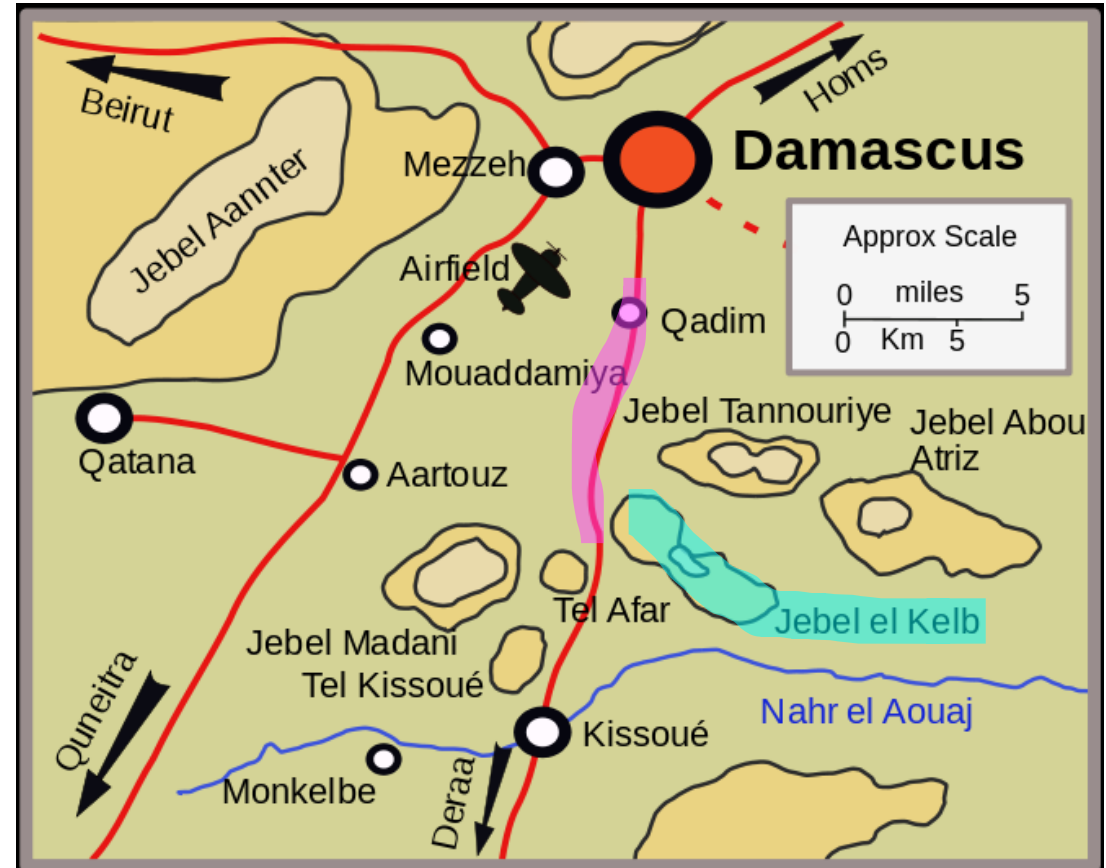


Blackburn (right) after receiving his VC at Buckingham Palace, 1916



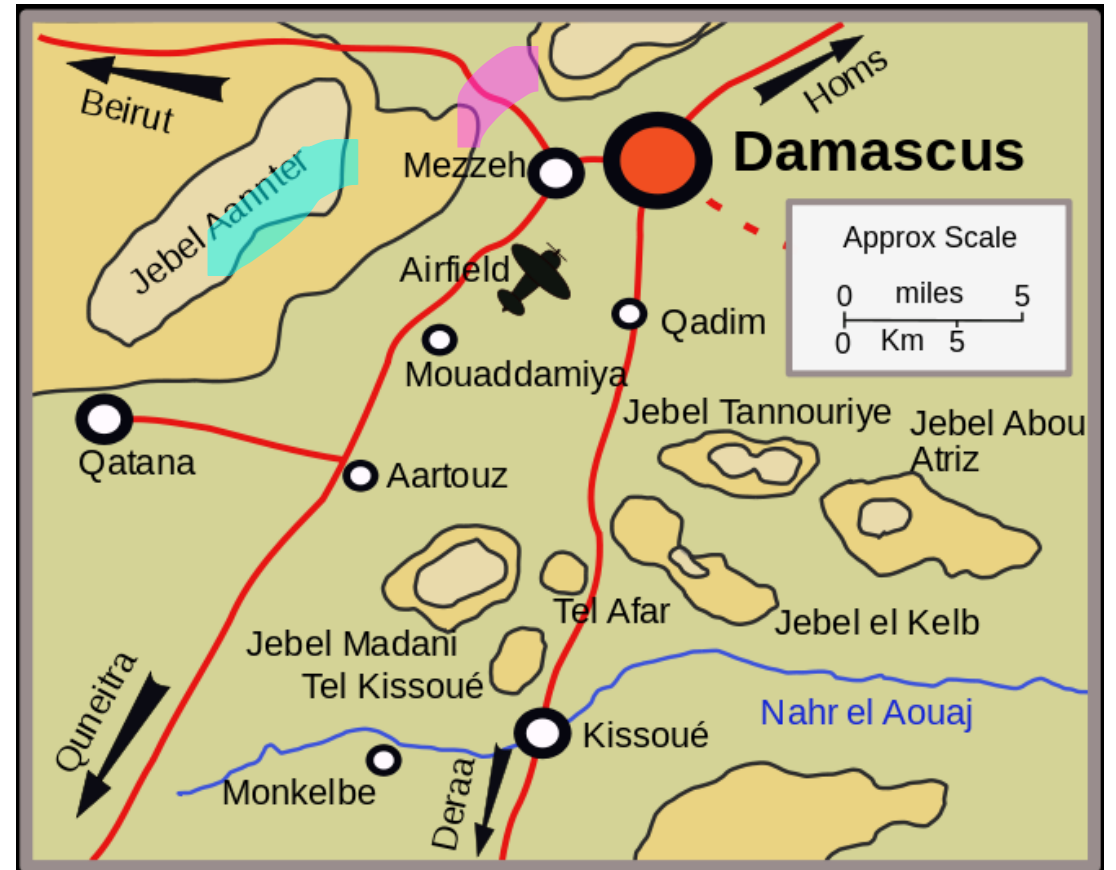
# 20 June 1941 - Syria

- At Blackburn's urging Casseau agreed to advance at 5 o'clock that afternoon, whereupon Blackburn ordered Gordon to deploy his four platoons astride the road by the **Jebel el Kelb** and inspire the French to attack boldly. Gordon placed most of his company in the French line on the heights east and west of the road and sent one platoon forward 1,000 yards ahead of the French infantry on the road itself.
- Half an hour later Casseau's infantry, mostly Africans, began to advance, with Casseau himself driving his car slowly along the road level with the leading men. However, when the infantry drew up to the machinegunners they halted, and it was not until Blackburn had sent his men to a new position 300 yards forward, and they opened fire again, that the Free French troops moved forward.
- In this fashion progress continued, the machinegunners leading the tired and dispirited African infantry until they had **advanced three miles and** were on the outskirts of Damascus. Here there was stronger opposition from Vichy troops occupying a large building and sniping from among the trees in the plantations, and some Vichy tanks appeared. The advance was halted for the night.



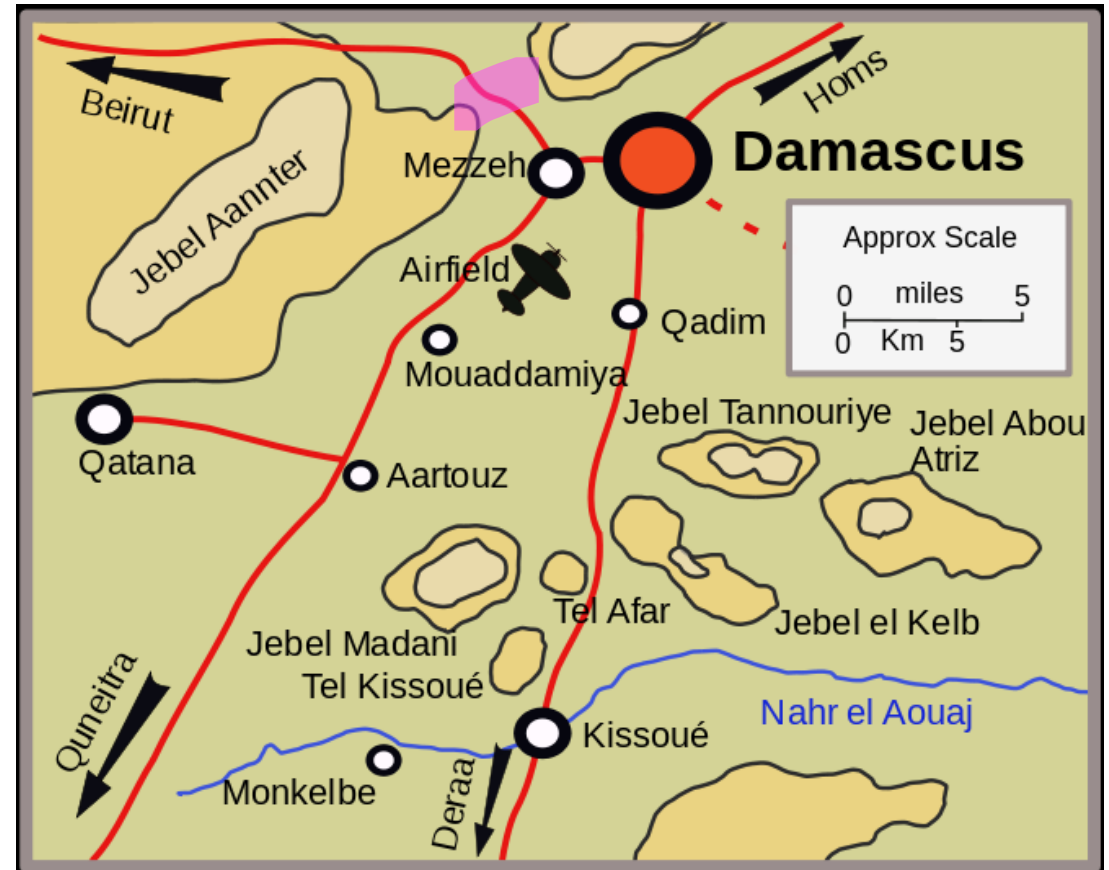
# 20 June 1941 - Syria

- Lloyd decided to continue to attack, but with the 2/3rd Battalion spread more widely across his front.
- His new orders were that one company of Australians was to cut the **Damascus-Beirut road**, while the remainder of the battalion advanced on to the **steep bare heights** which overlook the Kuneitra road from the west.



# 20 June 1941 - Syria

- Just after dark on 20 June Captain Parbury's company of the 2/3rd Battalion got a roadblock across the Damascus Beirut road.
- Though the forward companies of the 2/3rd had made some progress a French counter-attack coming in behind them had captured their commanding officer and most of his staff and headquarters company.
- Soon French vehicles began to arrive from the direction both of Damascus and of Beirut. In the darkness they pulled up at the road-block and the occupants were hustled out by the Australians. There were occasional scrimmages, but generally the French were completely surprised. Soon Parbury and his ninety men had twenty-six vehicles jammed head to tail on the road, two cars across the railway line to block it, and held eighty-six prisoners, about one-fifth of whom were officers.
- French fire from the heights above them Parbury considered, was likely to make it impossible for him to hold his road-block when dawn came therefore he decided to leave one platoon on the road, while he led the rest of his men up the side of the ravine to drive the French off the summit.



# 20 June 1941 - Atlantic

- The three "G" -class flying-boats of No. 119 Squadron R.A.F, were transferred to No. 10 squadron RAAF to fulfil ferrying requirements and thus permit Sunderlands to be retained for offensive operations. The flying-boats arrived on 11th June with incomplete flying crews and as they were required for special flights to the Middle East fairly soon, No. 10 had to make good these deficiencies.
- One of them, the Golden Fleece, developed engine trouble near Cape Finisterre on the night of 19th-20th June and after first making for Lisbon and then attempting to return to Mount Batten, crashed in the open sea.
- Most of her crew and passengers (including two Australians) were lost.
- Five survivors were eventually rescued by a German seaplane including Corporal Corcoran who thus became the squadron's only prisoner of war. Corcoran had previously survived the crash of a Sunderland in the Irish Sea on 28th April.

# 21 June 1941 - Syria

- At this stage Parbury (photo, Syria Nov 41) sent a signal to brigade headquarters which Lt J. E. MacDonald, the Australian liaison officer there, remembers as:
- "A Coy is astride Damascus-Beirut road at map reference 19831751. Water rations and ammo almost depleted and troops becoming exhausted. Enemy on high ground dominate this position from both sides of road and at dawn position will become untenable. I intend to attack."  
20/1 June.
  - Lt-Col P. K. Parbury, DSO, MC, NX69. 2/3 Bn; CO 31/51 Bn 1944, 2/7 Bn 1944-45. Factory superintendent; of Wollongong, NSW; b. Sydney, 16 Sep 1910. Then a Captain.
  - Capt E. N. Ayrton, NX5017; 2/3 and 4 Bns. Tram conductor; of Petersham, NSW; b. Bondi, NSW, 17 Sep 1913.





# 21 June 1941 - Syria

- Murdoch with his "platoon" of nine Australians and three Free French, was still at the road-block at the bottom of the gorge. He had placed eight men under Corporal Norcott on the left of the road facing towards Beirut, while he and Sergeant Copeman took up a position overlooking the road on the northern side. Here they held the road for twelve hours against intermittent forays by tanks and armoured cars which attempted to break through both from the east and the west.
- Some twenty French troops supported by two tanks advanced from the Damascus side of the barrier and made a brave attempt to clear the road. Copeman, having no better anti-tank weapon, threw three mortar bombs (which did not explode) on to the tanks, and he and Murdoch fired at the tanks' eye slits at a range of a few yards. The French attackers did not give up, however, until seven of them had been killed.
- Thenceforward attacks from Damascus ceased, though first an armoured car and later three tanks tried to break through from the western end of the gorge, but again without success.
- The reason why, after 11 o'clock, no further attempts were made to break through the 2/3<sup>rd</sup>'s barrier from the direction of Damascus was that, chiefly as a result of their success, Damascus had surrendered.
- About 4 p.m. a company of Indians arrived with antitank rifles and drove the French tanks away.



Bren gun carriers manned by Indian troops outside Damascus, June 1941. Note the wrecked Vichy French FT17 tank on the right.



# 21 June 1941 - Syria

- In the morning of the 21st Colonel Casseau's force on the Kiswe Damascus road had resumed its advance through the outskirts of the city. Vichy troops continued to fire from the barracks where they had held up the advance the previous evening, until Colonel Casseau ordered a gun forward to bombard it at a range of 1,000 yards.
- About 11 o'clock Casseau, believing that all opposition had ceased, sent two armoured cars forward. They had not gone far before they met a procession of motor-cars led by one flying a white flag.
- Casseau and Blackburn drove forward and, after a long discussion in French which Blackburn could only pretend to understand, he and Casseau drove into the city, the mayor leading the way. At the Town Hall Casseau and Blackburn (as the senior British officer present) accepted the formal surrender of the city and the police force. There were speeches, then a formal luncheon.
- About 4 p.m. a more picturesque procession led by General Legentilhomme entered the city in cars escorted by a detachment of Colonel Collet's Circassian cavalry.



Free French Circassian Cavalry outside the railway station in Damascus, June 1941.

**FRONT PAGE NEWS . . .**  
 Candidates take this interest and attention, for it is not possible to read the paper without being caught by the headlines. When they read the headlines, they find the news of the day.

The Official House of  
**CHAS. SANKEY FRASER**  
 5th FLOOR, ST. GEORGE'S HOTEL, BRISBANE.  
 10th FLOOR, ST. GEORGE'S HOTEL, SYDNEY.

**FORECAST:** Fine, cold night. Map, Page 11.

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# NAZIS AT WAR WITH RUSSIA: WORLD AMAZED



## Fighting On Front Of 1500 Miles: Soviet Cities Bombed

**GERMANY** astounded the world yesterday by invading Russia. Russia is resisting the invasion. Hitler struck suddenly at dawn. His troops, helped by Finns in the north and Rumanians in the south, crossed the border at many points, and German bombers raided Soviet cities.

Simultaneously Hitler issued a radio proclamation to Germany announcing the invasion and accusing Russia of deception and failure to keep her agreements with the Reich.

The Soviet Foreign Minister (M. Molotov) declared by radio that Germany's aggression was a "murderous act by gangster German fascists," and that the Red forces had been told to hunt the invaders out of the country.

Italy has announced that she considers herself at war with Russia as from 5 a.m. yesterday.

Australian Ministers believe that a large scale German offensive against Russia will help Britain. (See Page 3.)

In London the Russian Ambassador (M. Molotov) visited the British Foreign Secretary (Mr. Eden) and had a long talk with him.

Referred to as a "murderous act by gangster German fascists," the invasion of Russia was described by the British Foreign Secretary (Mr. Eden) as a "murderous act by gangster German fascists."

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**FRIENDS IN BERLIN.**—In November of last year the Russian Premier and Foreign Commissioner (Molotov) went to Berlin for his conference with Hitler. With them is an interpreter. Following this meeting Molotov and Germany reached a frontier agreement as "a step realising the friendly relations between the two nations."

## HITLER EXPLAINS HIS ACTION AND ABUSES RUSSIA

**HITLER** issued a proclamation to the German people early on Sunday morning announcing that Germany had attacked Russia. In it he made a long and bitter attack on Russia.

The German Propaganda Minister (Goebbels) read the proclamation over the German Radio at 3.40 a.m. It stated—

"The German people and German youth have been waiting for this day for many long years. It is the day when we can speak to the world as equals."

The British Ambassador in Germany (Sir Horace Lunn) issued a statement in which he said that the German attack on Russia was a "murderous act by gangster German fascists."

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### GOOD NEWS AT BREAKFAST TIME

**London Mail Special Service.**  
**LONDON, June 22.**—The news of Germany's attack on Russia came as the most welcome news on British breakfast tables. At 3 a.m. a B.B.C. broadcast gave Hitler's shocking proclamation in full. The public, though surprised for a moment, quickly realised that our own kindred was being attacked by a more powerful enemy than we had feared.

### U.S. Orders Italian Consuls Home

**Australian Associated Press.**  
**WASHINGTON, June 22.**—President Roosevelt has ordered that all Italian consuls in the U.S. should be recalled, and that all consular officials should be removed from American territory before July 15.







# JAPAN DECIDES POLICY TO-DAY; BERLIN URGING ACTION

## New Friends For Stalin -If He Wishes

*Courier-Mail Special Service and  
Australian Associated Press*

**A**N opportunity has already been given to M. Stalin to join the Democracies formally. It is understood that no alliance exists at the moment, but events may move fast.

*Courier-Mail Special Service and Australian Associated Press*  
**A**NNOUNCEMENT of Japan's policy towards the Russo-German war is expected after a Cabinet meeting in Tokio to-day.

The Domei (Japanese) News Agency predicted that the Cabinet meeting would define Japan's "sincere desire for peace."  
"It is deemed necessary to drive home to the whole nation that Japanese national policy is for the steady construction of the New Order in East Asia," Domei said.

D.N. [redacted]  
D.C. [redacted]  
D.C.N.S.  
D.O.I.  
D.D.M.I.

C.O.I.C. DAILY SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Serial No. DS/33

(Portions marked with marginal red line are  
not to be reproduced).

24/6/41

Submitted.

MOST SECRET

B. ADJACENT AREAS

NORTH of Australia Station

Most Secret  
Sources

Serial DS/29  
Para.B.

It is known that the Japanese warship, call-sign Ke No.2,  
which was in position 1°24'N or S, 154°12'E at 1900/17K,  
has, after being as far North as approx 6°N on 19th -  
20th June, was in position 1°24'N or S, 150°12'E at  
1900/22K.

The units previously reported in positions 00°N, 154°E  
and 03°N 154°E have returned to the vicinity of Truk.

*Lawson* (N)

*George B. Atchell* (M)

*[Signature]* (A)

C.O.I.C.

24th June, 1941



# 24 June 1941 - Syria

- On the 24th Wavell had sent a summary of the Syrian situation to Dill.
- He said that the plan then was that Habforce should take or by-pass Palmyra and advance to Homs; the Free French secure the Nebek-Homs road. The 16th British Brigade was to take Rayak, the Australians to clear up the situation at Merdjayoun and advance on Beirut.
- He reported that another brigade of the 6th Division—the 23rd—was on its way to Syria from Egypt.



# 24 June 1941 - Syria

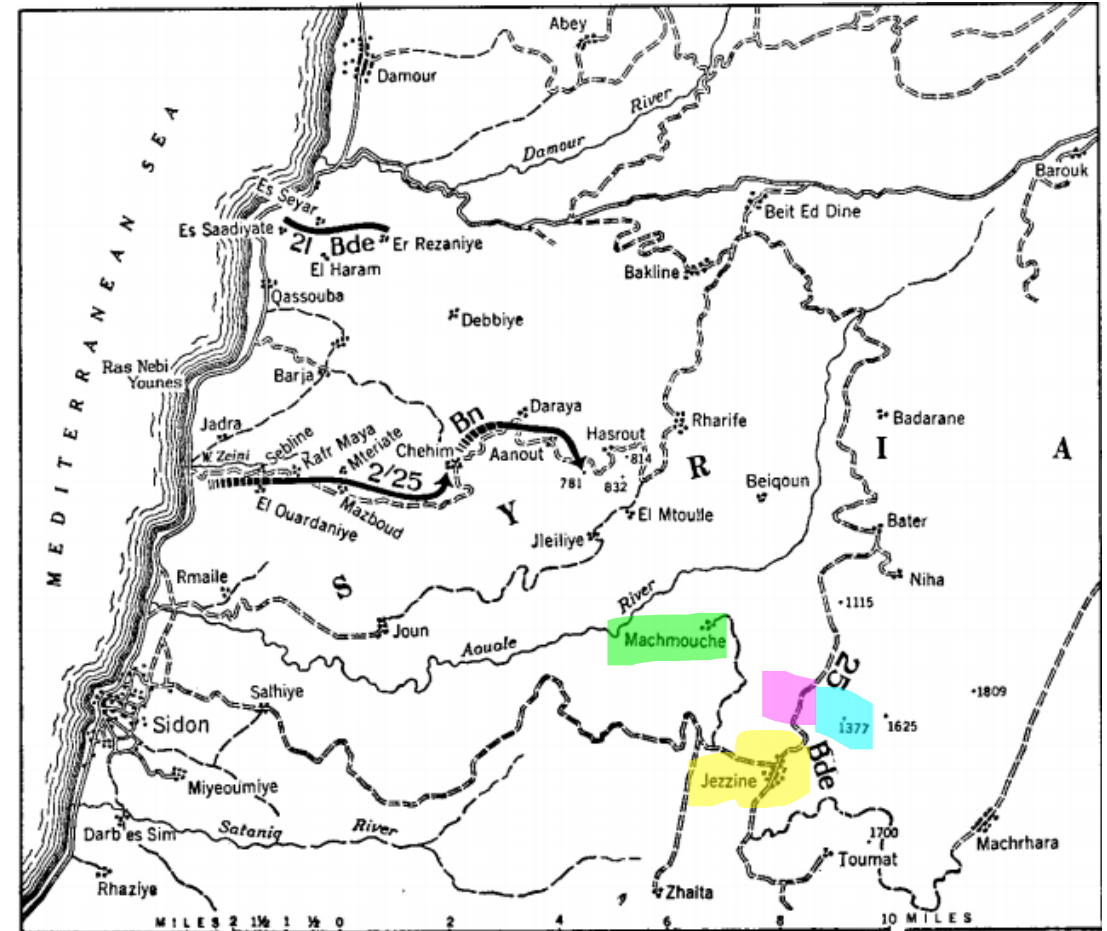
- Following the Vichy French counterattack at Merdjayoun on 15 June Allied troops successfully defended the pass leading back to Palestine.
- The 7th Australian Division, now commanded by Major-General Arthur "Tubby" Allen, reinforced by units from the 6th Australian Division, recaptured the town early on 24 June.
- The 2/5th Australian Field Regiment was part of the relief column. Lieutenant Roden Cutler repeatedly engaged enemy tanks, enemy infantry, enemy anti-tank, and enemy machine posts with his 25-pounder field gun, his Boys anti-tank rifle, his Bren gun, or his .303 rifle.



The command post of "D" troop of the 12th Battery of the 2/6th Field Regiment during action against the French in the Merdjayoun sector. Note the plotting board in use, the megaphone giving orders to the guns and the radio and field phones for receiving fire directions.

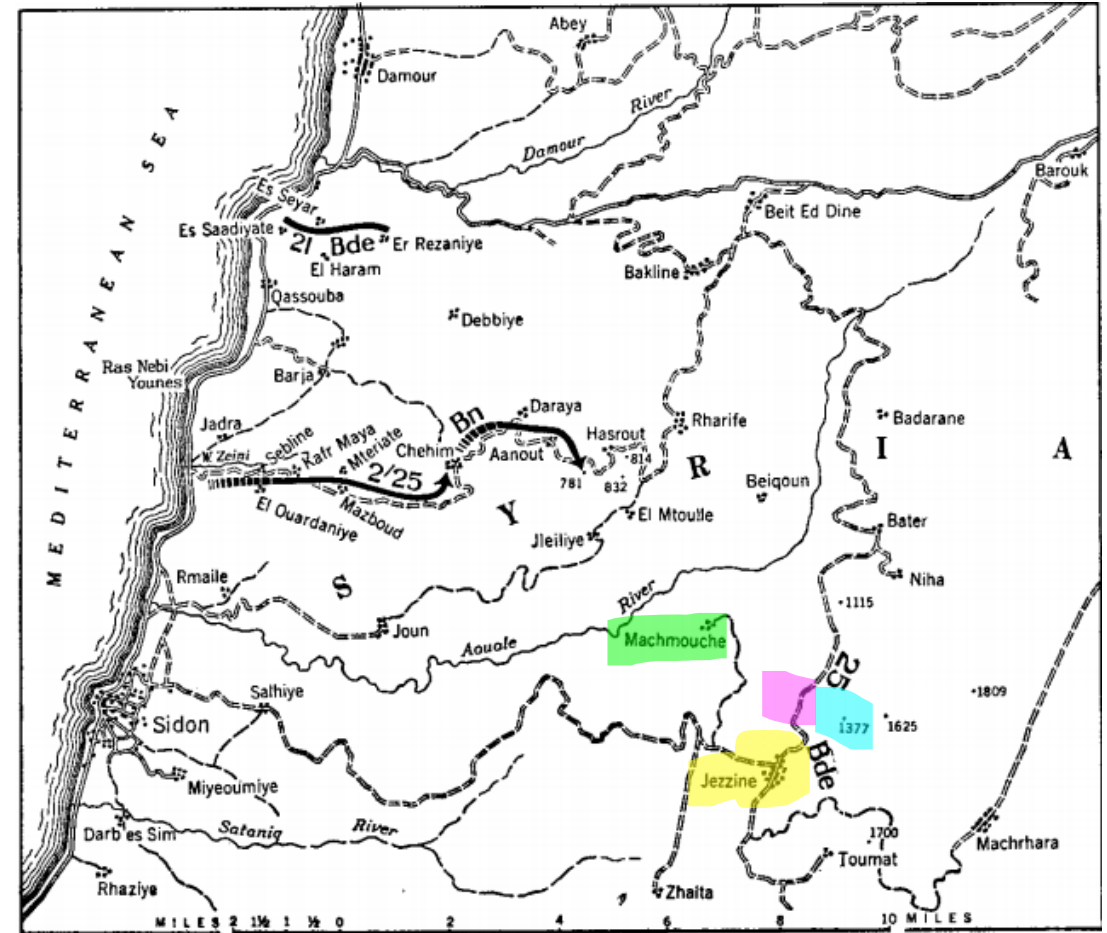
# 24 June 1941 - Syria

- The French attacks on the 17th and 18th June at Merdjayoun had ended in a stalemate. On the Australian side two depleted and weary companies of the 2/31st were forward astride the French line of advance. One, only sixty-five strong, was on Hill 1377 holding a front of 1,500 yards, and one across the main road to Beit ed Dine and the ravine through which it ran.
- On the left the Cheshire Yeomanry were protecting Jezzine against a possible enemy advance through the mountains by way of Machmouche.
- The French held forward posts within rifle shot of the Australian positions, which they shelled and mortared intermittently, and their patrols moved both by day and by night in the rugged area between the Australian positions on Hill 1377 and the town.
- Through this country it took the Australian ration parties and their mules two hours and a half to reach the store at battalion headquarters and six hours to climb back again.



# 24 June 1941 - Syria

- On the 18<sup>th</sup> the 2/14<sup>th</sup> had marched up from the coast and taken position on the right of the 2/31<sup>st</sup>.
- After false starts on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, on the 24<sup>th</sup> the 2/14<sup>th</sup> attacked French fortified positions on the highest points in their front with two companies. They reached the top of the heights but could not penetrate the fort. The attacking companies lost about forty-eight men including ten killed.
- The men of the 2/31<sup>st</sup>, now numbering only 545, were also showing signs of extreme fatigue. "This is noticeable today when not noticeable yesterday," wrote a company commander on the 24<sup>th</sup>, "several are suffering from slight shell-shock."
- Brigadier Plant arrived at Jezzine on the afternoon of the 24<sup>th</sup> to replace Brigadier Cox in command of 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade.



# 24 June 1941 - Mediterranean

- In June 1,900 men were landed at Tobruk and 5,148 evacuated, and the average daily quantity of supplies carried in rose to 97 tons. An event of the highest importance to the defence was the arrival on 3rd June of the petrol-carrier “Pass of Balmaha”, escorted by H.M.S. Auckland and H.M.S.A.S. Southern Maid.
- On 2nd June Morshead had been informed that by the end of the day only 130 tons of petrol would remain, equivalent to four days consumption.
- The “Pass of Balmaha”, making all of her maximum speed of 6 knots, in two voyages brought in more than 1,400 tons of bulk petrol.
- Ships had to face heavy air attacks, and the harbour and its approaches were constantly mined and were kept clear only by the great exertions of the few minesweepers, among which were some South African whalers which had arrived in January.
- Supplies were carried in regularly by destroyers and captured Italian schooners and other small craft. All warships which visited Tobruk carried in stores and brought away men.
- Water-tankers and petrol-carriers were so few and valuable that they had to be sailed in during the dark of the moon, when the risk was less.
- All unloading had to be done at night with the greatest speed, and it was necessary for ships not to approach Tobruk before dusk and to be well clear before dawn.



Pass of Balmaha



# 24 June 1941 - Mediterranean

- On 24th June the sloops Auckland and Paramatta, escorting the Pass of Balmaha once more to Tobruk, were attacked first by torpedo-bombers, then by three formations of dive-bombers, each of sixteen aircraft, and a few hours later yet again.
- The Auckland was sunk with the loss of 36 of her 198 crew. Survivors were rescued by HMAS Parramatta, HMAS Vendetta and HMAS Waterhen. The Pass of Balmaha—badly damaged—was towed in by Waterhen.



Manning Anti-aircraft  
Gun, H.M.A.S. *Perth*.

*(R.A.N. Historical Section)*



## 24 June 1941 - Atlantic

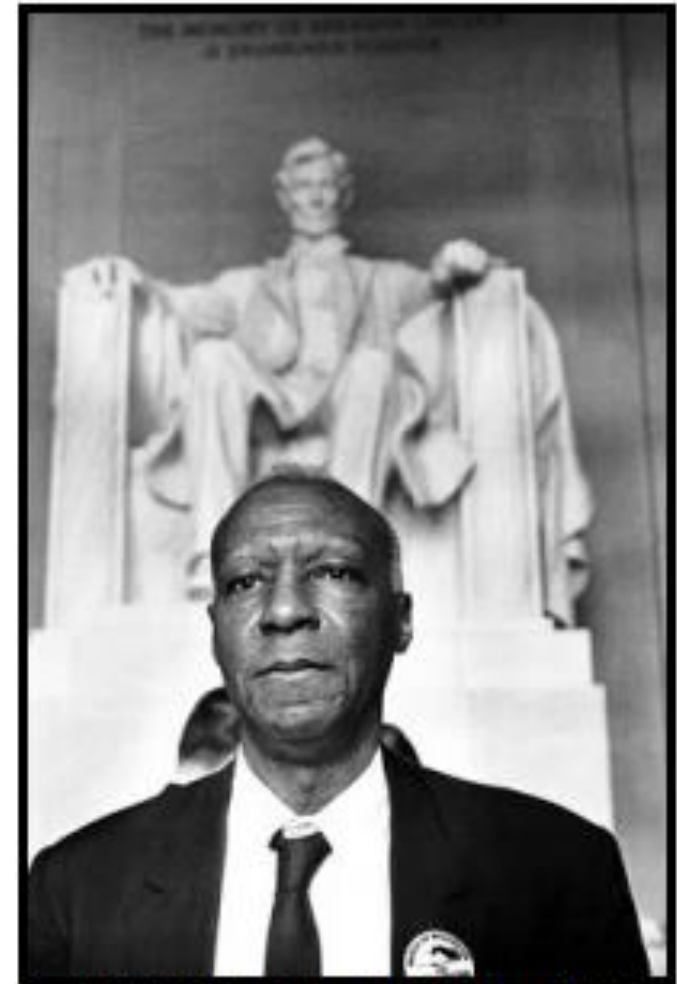
- A No 10 Squadron Sunderland reached Pembroke Dock in bad weather and while an air raid alert was in progress during the night of 24th June, overshot the flare path and crashed on the rocks off Popton Point in Milford Haven, two of the pilots being fatally injured.



A Sunderland of No. 10 Squadron RAAF based at RAF Station Pembroke Dock.

# 25 June 1941 - Washington

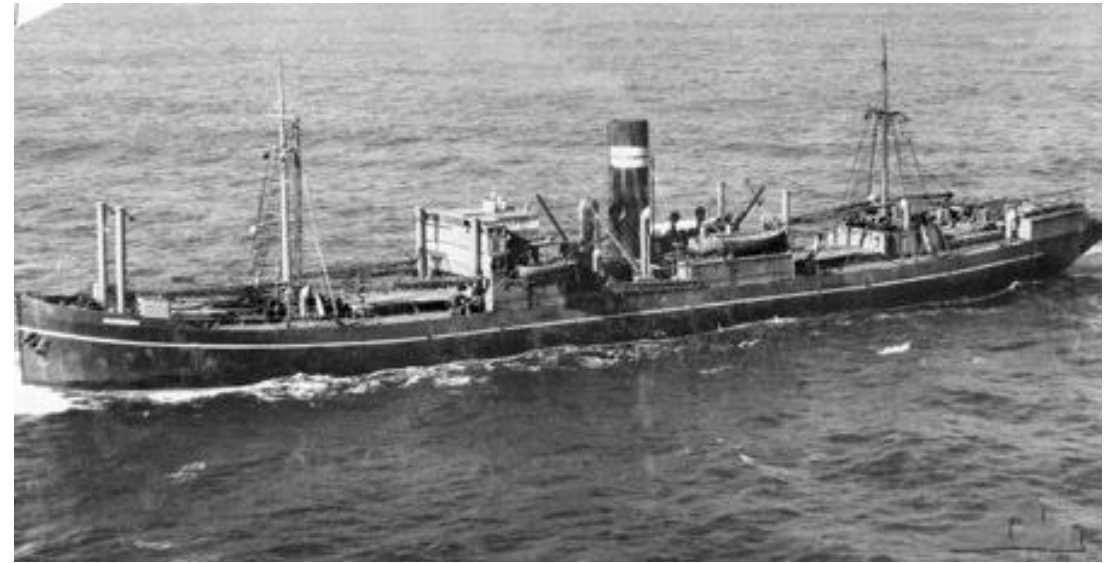
- While the U.S. had not officially declared war on the Axis powers in the summer of 1941, the country was energetically producing arms and ammunition for its allies overseas.
- Despite the boom in manufacturing this concerted rearming effort brought, African Americans were barred from working in defense plants. Racial tensions rose as Black labor leaders (such as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin) and their white allies began organizing protests and marches.
- To combat this social unrest, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 (the Fair Employment Act) banning discriminatory employment practices by Federal agencies and all unions and companies engaged in war-related work on 25 June 1941.
- The order came three days after Hitler broke the non-aggression pact and invaded the Soviet Union, at which time the Communist Party quickly directed its members to get behind the draft and forbade participation in strikes for the duration of the war—angering some leftists.



Civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph  
(1889-1979)

# 26 June 1941 – Indian Ocean

- On 26th June the Australian steamer Mareeba (3,472 tons), bound from Java to Colombo was intercepted by a German commerce raider, disguised as the Japanese Sakito Maru.
- The raider ordered Mareeba to stop. Mareeba's master, Captain Skinner, immediately broadcast an SOS to warn other ships and the naval authorities.
- The raider immediately opened heavy fire, one of the first salvos destroying Mareeba's wireless room.
- Mareeba's complement of forty-eight were taken on board the raider, where one subsequently died from a heart attack. The ship was sunk by scuttling charges at 8°15'N., 88°06'E.
- The Mareeba's crew were being transported to Germany on a raider supply ship, the Spreewald.
- On 31 January 1942, while on her approach to Bordeaux in France, Spreewald was torpedoed by U-333, whose commander believed her to be a British ship. Two torpedoes hit Spreewald amidships, causing her to burn furiously and slowly sink in position 45°12'N 24°50'W with the loss of 26 of Mareeba's crew including Captain Skinner.
- U-105 picked up 25 crewmen and 55 prisoners from Spreewald in lifeboats and rafts.



Aerial port side view of the Australian cargo vessel SS Mareeba

# 26 June 1941 - Syria

- General Allen instructed Brigadier Plant that it would be futile to attempt more attacks on the heights dominating the road and that he should blast the enemy off the rock-strewn summits with artillery fire and take command of the ground on his front by aggressive patrolling.
- "The country was as bad as Gallipoli and worse," said Plant later. "The hills were bigger; there were more boulders and, in the Kharat area, no scrub at all."
- On the 26th June Allen informed Plant that he would send a small and mobile column from the coastal sector through the mountains by way of Aanout and Rharife towards Beit ed Dine. When the effect of this drive had become apparent, but not until then, Plant was to press on and join the 21st Brigade—at Beit ed Dine it was hoped. For this new thrust the Queenslanders of the 2/25<sup>th</sup> were chosen.



*(Australian War Memorial)*

A rocky slope near Jezzine.

# 26 June 1941 – North Africa

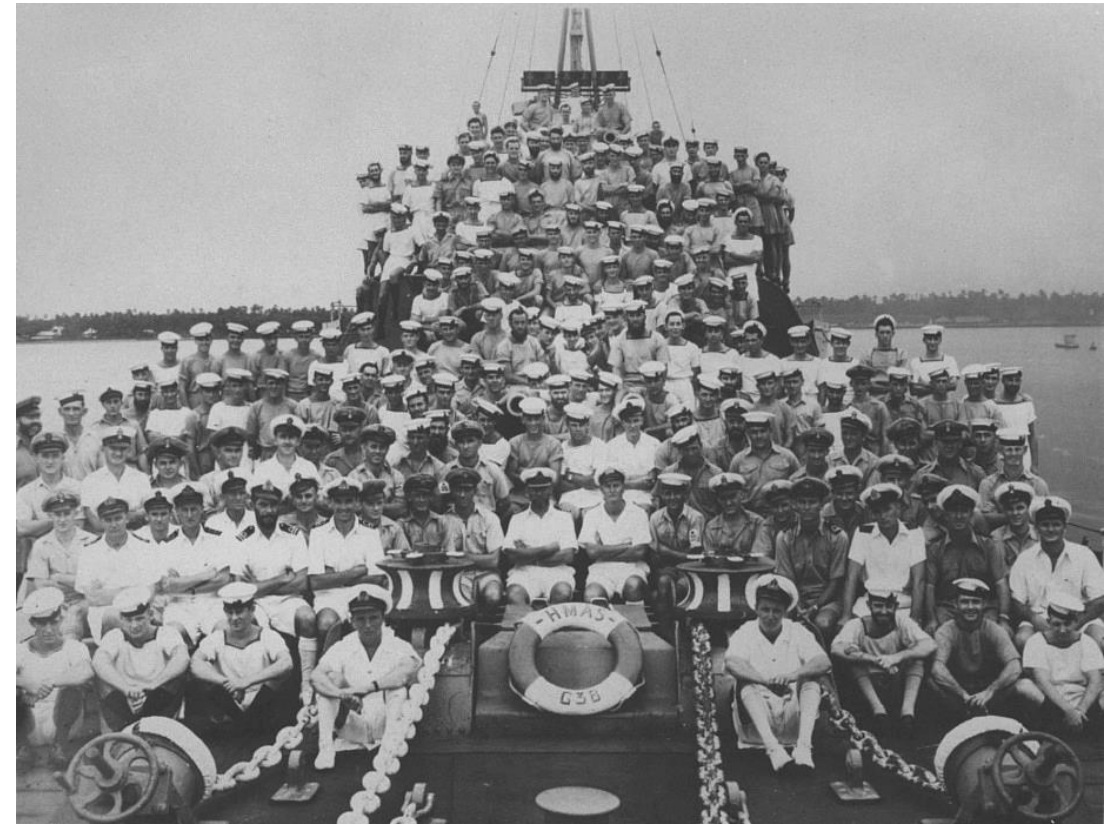
- On 26th June General Blamey telegraphed to Mr Menzies a reply to a series of questions from him, including one on the future policy with regard to Tobruk.
- "Are you satisfied," Mr Menzies had asked, "that garrison at Tobruk can hold out? Should we press for evacuation or for any other and what course?"
- Blamey replied that he was satisfied that Tobruk could hold out for the present. He assured Menzies that the problem of evacuating Tobruk, should it become necessary, was being considered; the navy was of the opinion that evacuation was practicable.



At Julis, Palestine, Menzies stands to attention while Blamey, takes the salute. To Menzies' left is Lavarack. (Feb 41)

# 26 June 1941 - Mediterranean

- Nizam joined King's force in company with Naiad, Kingston and Jaguar, on the 17th June. Perth, after making good in Alexandria the damage suffered in the Crete campaign, joined on the 26th, relieving Leander, which had been with the force since the 13th.
- Hodgkinson, Hotspur's 1st Lieutenant, wrote:
- In a way it was a pity to leave the Syrian coast. After Greece and Crete it was an excellent tonic to be doing something aggressive again. Everybody loved Haifa [there were "excellent dinners at Pross's].
- And, on returning five days later to the force:
- The Syrian campaign for the next three weeks was a honeymoon. The weather was perfect. At last we had a real squadron of fighters overhead, and each time we went out, which was only about half the time, we had some amusement.
- Hodgkinson tells a story of Nizam, lying outside Hotspur alongside in Haifa.
- Some of Nizam's liberty men "discovered a lighter lying ahead of us completely unguarded by the army. And guess what was in that lighter. It's hardly conceivable, but it was beer. Some of the sailors were still tight next morning, and one insisted on falling in with the Hotspurs and scrubbing our decks instead of theirs, and he had to be led gently back. Windfalls like that aren't common."



HMAS Nizam's ship's company in 1941



# 26 June 1941 – North Africa

- RAAF EATS pilots in No. 250 Squadron RAF spent the second half of June making sweeps over eastern Cyrenaica, escorting Blenheims to attack Axis airfields, and covering Tobruk convoys, now vital because the failure of Battleaxe inevitably meant prolongation of the siege.
- On 26th June while escorting bombers to Gazala, raw as they were, the Australians acquitted themselves with distinction. Pilot Officer Caldwell (photo, date uncertain) and Sergeant Coward each shot down an Me-109 from a force of thirty enemy aircraft which attacked between Capuzzo and Tobruk, while Pilot Officer Kent, after badly damaging a Messerschmitt last seen spinning away in a dense cloud of smoke over Gazala, dispatched a G-50 and came down low to destroy a staff car on the escarpment near Salum. One Australian was lost on this sortie.
- Four days later Kent was himself shot down when nine Tomahawks escorting a Tobruk convoy met the attack of twenty Stukas escorted by thirty enemy fighters. Caldwell again figured prominently, shooting down two Ju-87's and sharing with Sergeant Whittle an Me-110 claimed badly damaged but almost certainly destroyed.



COIC 26/6/41

A.C.H. Townsville

0048/25Z

0450/25Z

1000/25Z

1119/25Z

4. A Catalina F/B from Gavutu carried out a search on 25/6 for the 60 ton motor vessel "BALUS", four days overdue at Vanikoro from Tulagi with Europeans on board. The search covered east coast San Christobel - ULAWA - West Coast Malaita - TULAGI. All islands in this area were examined but the aircraft reported nil sightings.

A further search by the same F/B is to commence from Gavutu at dawn 26/6 extending to Vanikoro via Graciosa Bay and Utupua Island. The aircraft is to report from Vanikoro and to endeavour to return to Gavutu. ✓

COIC 27/6/41

DS/35 Para.4.

A.C.H. Townsville

0315/26Z

3. The M.V. "BALUS" was located by the Catalina F/B at Graciosa Bay yesterday. The aircraft returned to Gavutu and has been ordered to proceed to Moresby today (27th June). ✓

*105-4*

C.O.I.C. DAILY SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL-INTELLIGENCE

D.N.I.  
D.O.D.  
D.C.N.S.  
D.O.I.  
D.D.M.I.

Serial No.DS/36

(Portions marked with marginal red line are  
not to be reproduced).

27/6/41

Submitted.

MOST SECRET

A. AUSTRALIA STATION

A.C.H.Townsville  
0741/26Z  
2157/26Z

1. The 3 Hudsons at Rabaul left at 0610K today (27th June) for Townsville via Moeresby, Horn Island, Cooktown and Cairns.

They have been instructed to obtain photographs and report fuelling facilities at Horn Island, Cooktown and Cairns.



C.Z.M.0941/25Z

1. The N.Y.K. passenger liner "ASAMA MARU" (17,000 tons) is due to arrive at Tandjoeng Priok on 2nd July to convey German women and children to Japan en route for Germany. She has a speed of 19-21 knots. ✓

Comment - No change of programme consequent on the outbreak of war between the Soviet and Germany has so far been notified and nothing is known as to whether the Japanese intend to evacuate their nationals beyond a press report to this effect on 23rd June.

C.O.I.S.0109/25Z

2. The Vichy French Sloop "AMIRAL CHARNER" (1,969 tons) left Saigon on 21st June. ✓

WEST of Australia Station

Information Summary  
No.56 Indian  
Censorship

Intercepted letters from Portuguese India reveal that the German ship "DRACHENFELS" (6,342 tons) which is at Marmagoa, has been prepared against the necessity of being scuttled.

*Lawrence* (N)

(M)

Comment - This doubtless applies to the other two German ships in this port - "EHRENFELS" (7,752 tons) and "BRAUNFELS" (7,347 tons) and may indicate that "DRACHENFELS" is preparing to depart. ✓

*AS Bradshaw*

(A) G.O.I.C. 27/6/41

# 27 June 1941 - Brisbane

## **"Pushed Towards Sea"**

The Asahi points out that the Soviet-German war has cut off one of Japan's most important war-time trade routes.

The Kokumin claims that the interruption to traffic on the Trans-Siberian railway has reduced the value to Japan of the Russo-Japanese pact.

**"Communist Russia geographically pushes Japan towards the sea," it declares.**

The Nichi Nichi says: "Japan should take advantage of this one chance in years to work towards the establishment of the New Order in East Asia by preparing to take direct action where necessary."

Berlin political circles suggest that Japan may drop Mr. Matsuoka, Foreign Minister, from the Cabinet in revising her attitude to Russia.

Chinese opinion is that Japan is undecided whether to support Germany's attacks on Russia or launch a move in the Southern Pacific.

## **BRITISH COMMUNISTS' SUPPORT FOR WAR**

LONDON, June 26.—Mr. J. Gallacher, Britain's only Communist M.P., told the Press that British Communists would support the Government in any steps to increase co-operation with the Soviet. It had become unnecessary to push the campaign for a people's peace." There must be co-operation and a big drive in the factories.—A.A.P.



27 June 1941 - Brisbane

# Wide Effects on Primary Industry

**F**AR-REACHING domestic repercussions are expected by the Federal Government to follow a new agreement just completed with Britain for the disposal of foodstuffs to Britain in the third year of the war in accordance with the shipping space available.

The Commonwealth Government will ask the dairy industry to transfer from the manufacture of butter to the manufacture of cheese and dried and condensed milk. In future a higher price will be offered for the milk content in cheese than that in butter, to encourage the industry to make cheese.

No eggs in the shell would be exported, but there would be large exports of dried eggs at a price probably equivalent to last year's price plus the cost of treatment.

Refrigerated space to the Middle East would be used to convey beef, and refrigerated space to Britain would be used for lamb. Surplus of beef still left in Australia would be canned and surplus lamb would be placed in refrigerated storage.

## Domestic Effects

Sir Earle Page, announcing completion of the agreement, said that it had been made necessary because the volume of shipping space available to carry foodstuffs from Australia to Britain in the third year of the war would be only one-fifth that available in the first year.

The Federal Government would attempt to alter the consumption habits of the Australian people to assist in using up unexportable surpluses of foodstuffs.

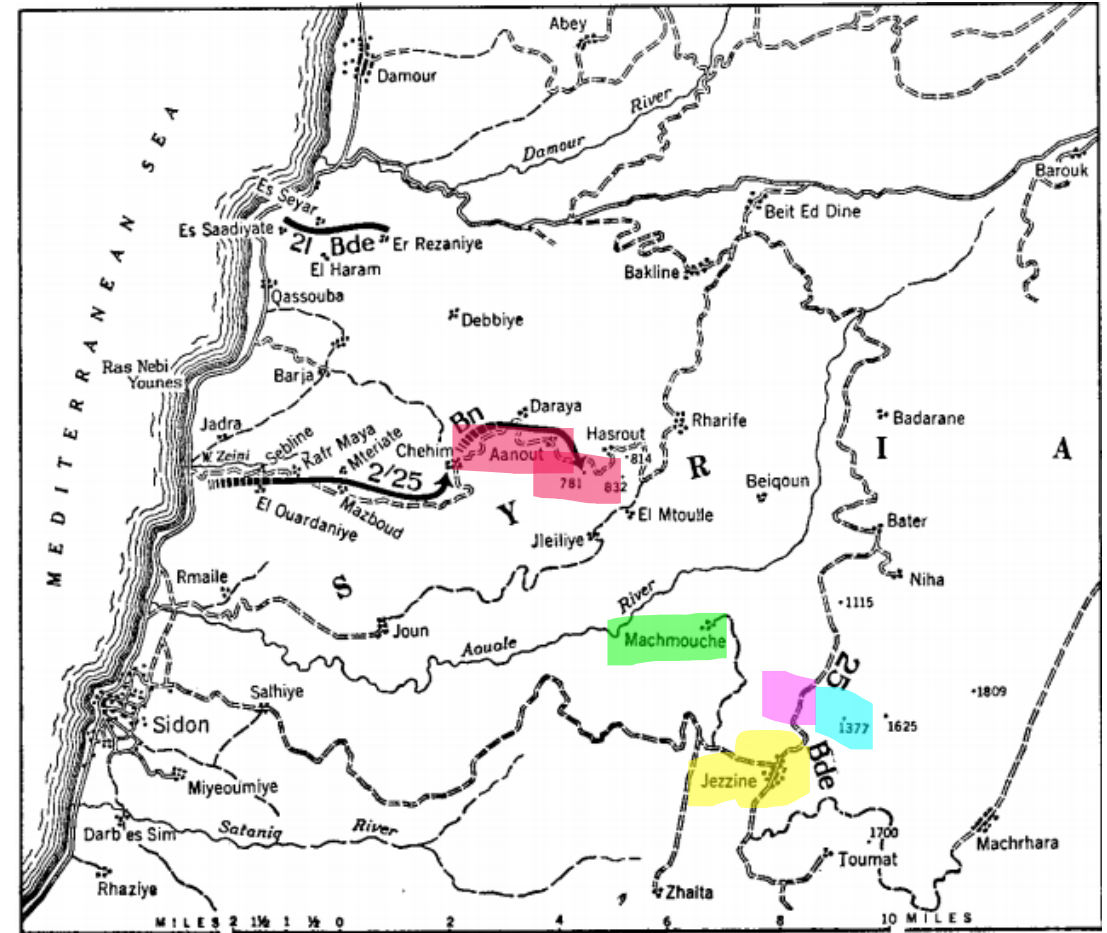
Australian industries to make every effort to adapt their productions to shipping possibilities; for example, by de-boning, canning, or pressing meat.

Alternative markets to be developed wherever possible.

Britain will release tinplate supplies and arrange for further tinplate supplies from the United States.

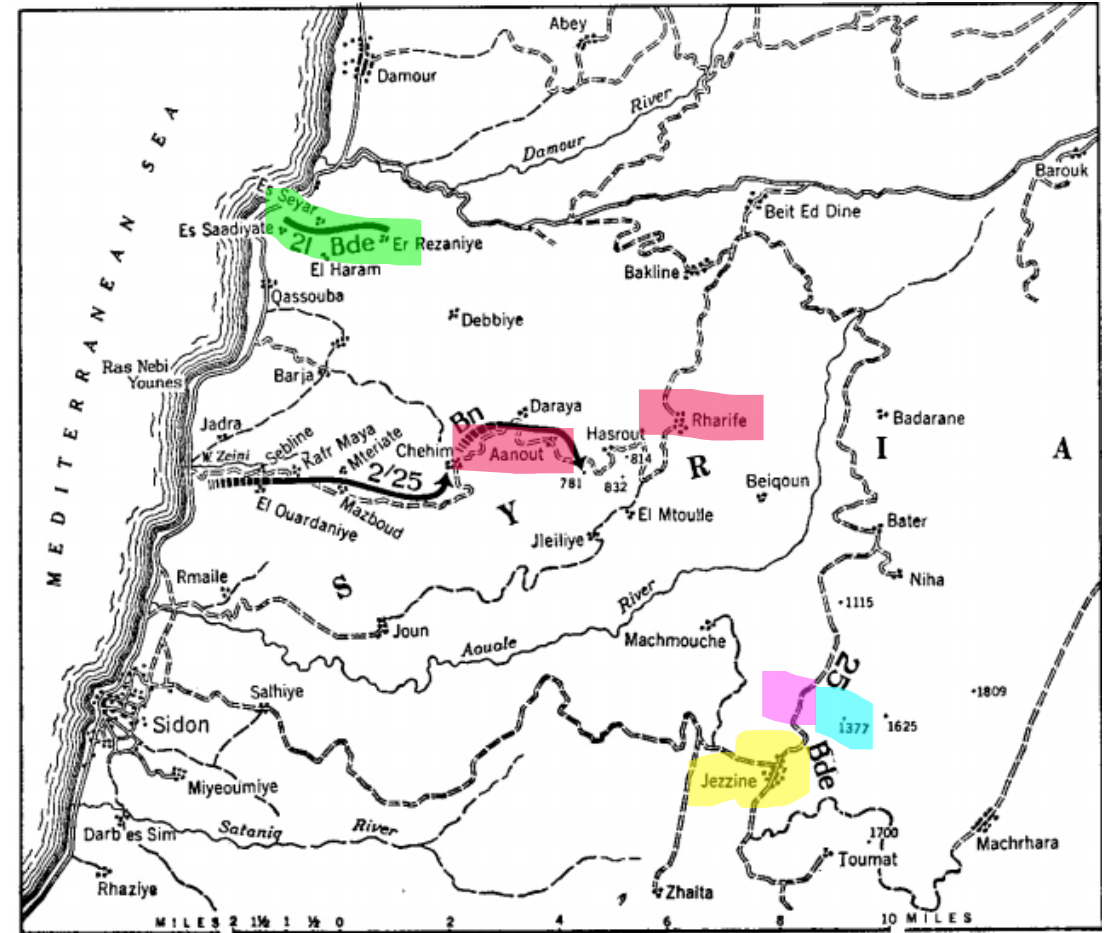
# 27 June 1941 - Syria

- The 2/25th Battalion was now only three rifle companies strong. After dark on the 26th two companies commanded by Captain Marson marched from Seblin along the road through Kafr Maya and thence (by-passing Mazboud where a patrol had been fired on) over the hills past Mteriate and along a ravine towards Chehim.
- The mules carrying the mortars could not negotiate the rugged country and were left behind at Mteriate.
- At dawn on the 27th they reached the road immediately south of Chehim.
- After a skirmish, in which two armoured cars were knocked out with sticky bombs, and artillery fire from guns on the coast the French withdrew from Chehim.
- By midday a patrol had found the road through Mazboud to be clear and Withy had sent four carriers through to Chehim.
- The 2/25th marched on to Daraya, **Aanout** and **Hill 781**. There an advance guard of carriers came under mortar and machine-gun fire from Hasrout and the advance petered out.



# 27 June 1941 - Syria

- The inland flank was now secured and the force on the coast was moved forward to **a line** from which it could begin reconnoitring for an attack on Damour.



## 27 June 1941 - Atlantic

- Flight Lieutenant Thurstun was attacked on 27th June by a Heinkel 111 which made several abortive attempts at head-on attacks, but finally withdrew damaged and trailing smoke.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

SUK15048

1941-10-02. Flight Lieutenant G. R. Thurstun at the controls of a Sunderland aircraft of No. 10 Squadron RAAF, at RAF Station Pembroke Dock.

# 24 to 28 June 1941 - Syria

- After Damascus surrendered the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion lead the advance down the Damascus Beirut road towards Beirut in conjunction with the 16<sup>th</sup> British Brigade which was advancing north towards the road further west from Yafour and Saboura.
- Little progress was made in the face of effective French resistance on Jebel Mazar, rising 1,600 feet above the surrounding country, and commanding a long stretch of the Damascus-Beirut road which skirts its northern edge.
- The 2/3<sup>rd</sup> fought their way onto the Jebel but were then too short of water and ammunition to hold it in the absence of controlled artillery support. Once again failure of communications left the advanced units with no choice but withdrawal.



# 24 to 28 June 1941 - Syria

- The enemy was shelling the road heavily and with accuracy—the heaviest fire that these Australians had encountered in three campaigns.
- With Parbury's company leading, the 2/3rd advanced astride the road, widely dispersed and moving fast to lessen the risk of casualties. The platoon on the south side of the road reached the hill which was its objective with only one casualty, and then was attacked by two French tanks.
- The Australians north and south of the road set upon these tanks with a strange collection of weapons.
  - Sergeant Hoysted hit the tanks with smoke bombs from a 2-inch mortar, firing until they were only 10 yards from him.
  - Murdoch fired at and hit the tanks with Very lights.
  - MacDougal, who lay firing an anti-tank rifle, had his pistol and holster shot off by one of the tank's machine-guns.
  - Private Donoghue lay behind a rock and fired at close range with his Bren.
- Evidently bewildered by this fusillade which, though it was incapable of harming the tanks, was extremely spectacular, the tanks retreated. The intense shelling continued.

# 24 to 28 June 1941 - Syria

- Capt Woolford medical officer of the 2/6 Fd Regt, wrote: "It was in the third week of the Syrian campaign that I remember observing fatigue most.
- My RAP was then at Kafr Houn on the Jerme-Jezzine road, about six miles from Jezzine.
- I observed it particularly among men of the 2/14 Bn, 2/3 MG Bn and 2/5 Fd Coy, who were about or passing through that area.
- I think also it was at this time I observed the craving for sweets. Being right on the roadside we did a brisk trade in coffee and tea.
- I recollect that it was about that time that Lt Clarke of 2/6 Fd Regt called in to ask me if we had any chocolate or similar for himself and his men. I clearly remember his remarking that he had never before felt the urge to eat chocolate as he did then.



The command post of "D" troop of the 12th Battery of the 2/6th Field Regiment in action in the Merdjayoun sector. Note the plotting board in use, the megaphone giving orders to the guns and the radio and field phones for receiving fire directions.

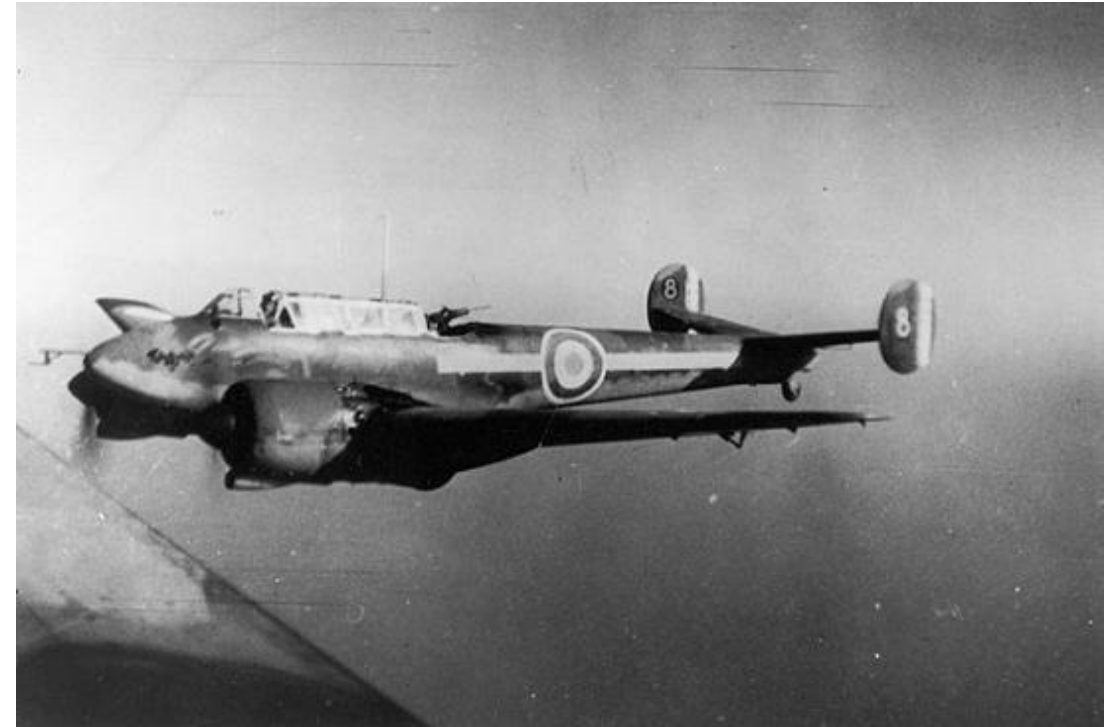
# 28 June 1941 - Syria

- **Habforce** continued doggedly to press forward round **Palmyra**. On the 28th they were greatly heartened by the spectacle of a bombing attack on the enemy and six French bombers being shot down by the escort of nine Tomahawks of No. 3 Squadron R.A.A.F.
- The 1/Essex captured the chateau that day, but the defenders of Palmyra itself still resisted strongly.



# 28 June 1941 - Syria

- No. 3 Squadron escorted the Blenheims on six raids (seventy-seven sorties), one of which on 28th June was to aid Habforce which was making very slow progress in its advance on Palmyra. On each occasion the Tomahawks flew first to Damascus, refuelled and then flew on with the Blenheims to Palmyra.
- On the 28th, after the bombing, the nine escorting Tomahawks patrolled east of Palmyra and encountered six Glenn Martins attacking Habforce units. All six bombers were shot down, F-Lt Rawlinson destroying three, F.O. Turnbull two and Sgt Wilson one.
- Two of the four offensive patrols undertaken during this period by No. 3 had also been in support of Habforce on the 25th and 26th, and, on the 25th, eight Tomahawks shot down three of four Potez 63 aircraft found fifteen miles south-west of Palmyra.
- Ground troops had great difficulty in distinguishing French aircraft from British because of a confusing similarity between their identification roundels.



Potez 63

# 29 June 1941 - Syria

- No. 3 again escorted the Blenheims to aid Habforce on 29th June.
- The policy of strafing French airfields was also resumed with great success. Forty-two such sorties were flown by No. 3 and the squadron destroyed seven aircraft and damaged thirteen on various days.
- Airfield defences were poor and the Tomahawks had complete freedom of action.
- In one particularly damaging attack on Kuseir on 29th June, a hangar was set ablaze, a petrol and an ammunition dump destroyed and many trucks damaged.



Pilots of No. 3 Squadron at Rosh Pinna airfield in northern Palestine during the Syrian campaign. A Tomahawk aircraft is in the background. Left to right: Sgts R. K. Wilson, T. D. Parker, D. Scott, G. E. Hiller; F-O's W. G. Kloster, P. St G. B. Turnbull; F-Lt J. R. Perrin; Sqn Ldr P. Jeffrey; Sgt A. C. Cameron; F-Lt A. C. Rawlinson; Sqn Ldr J. C. Laver (medical officer); F-Os J. H. W. Saunders, W. E. Jewell; F-Lt L. E. S. Knowles; F-O T. H. Trimble.

(Air Ministry)



# 29 June 1941 - Mediterranean

- Towing in Pass of Balmaha was the Waterhen's last exploit for on 29th June she was herself bombed and sunk by near misses when once more proceeding to Tobruk, fortunately with no casualties. HMS Defender went alongside and took off the troops and ship's company.
- The enemy were not having it all their own way in the supply war. British submarines sank two Italian cargo ships on 26 June and another on 28th and a Dutch submarine sank another on the 30th.



The crew of HMAS Waterhen getting ready to abandon the sinking ship.

# 30 June 1941 - Britain

- The first Australian medium bomber squadron (No. 455 Squadron R.A.A.F.) had begun to form in No. 5 Group, Bomber Command at **Swinderby**, Lincolnshire on 6th June but its Australian ground crew were stuck in Australia with no transport.
- Eventually on 30th June a skeleton R.A.F. ground staff was provided at Swinderby.
- On the same day the flight commanders, one of whom was Squadron Leader French, an Australian who had already seen action with Nos. 50, 106, 207 and 97 Squadrons R.A.F., also reported for duty.



# 30 June 1941 - Atlantic

- On 30th June a four-engined Focke-Wulf 200 (photo) approached Flying Officer Wearne at 1 p.m., and after flying a parallel course for a few minutes turned in to attack from the starboard quarter. Wearne dived low on the water and increased speed to confuse the enemy's aim while his own gunners secured hits on the Focke-Wulf as it passed astern.
- The next enemy attack from the port quarter was frustrated by turning the Sunderland steeply in towards the Focke-Wulf's line of approach, so that it could not bring its forward guns to bear. The German aircraft then took station about 500 yards astern, out of effective machine-gun range, but where it could effectively employ its own cannon.
- By suddenly throttling back his engines, Wearne brought the enemy back into range of his tail turret which secured some strikes. The Focke-Wulf broke away and after one more attack from the port beam, climbed up into cloud and was not seen again.



# 30 June 1941 - Atlantic

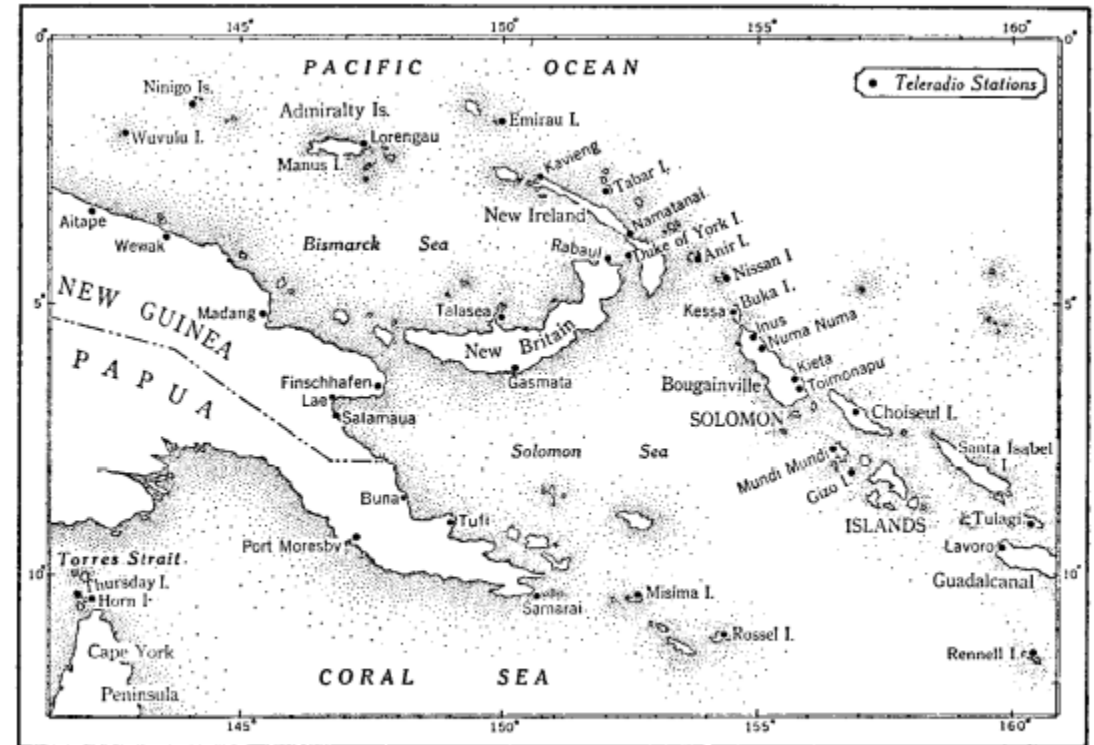
- English ground wireless stations intercepted a message indicating that some of the enemy crew were wounded, but the Sunderland had itself suffered damage below the waterline, in the port float and in the port-outer oil tank.
- As large quantities of oil were being lost, and engine failure seemed certain, Wearne set course for base. His junior air mechanic, Leading Aircraftman Griffin, volunteered to crawl out inside the port wing to inspect the damage.
- Griffin found two large holes in the bottom of the side tank which had practically drained into the engine nacelle. He returned for plugs and stopped the leak, then made a third journey into the wing, and, by using an old peach tin as a ladle, transferred the spilt oil back into the tank through a hole he made in its top.
- Despite the cramped space and the intense heat he made a fourth journey into the wing with another two gallons of oil which was also slowly poured into the tank, the whole operation taking more than an hour and a half, until the Sunderland safely reached Mount Batten.



Plymouth, England. C. 1940-07. Portrait of Flight Lieutenant H. Birch and Flying Officer A. G. H. Wearne (left), pilots of No. 10 Squadron RAAF, based at RAF Station Mount Batten.

# June 1941 - Pacific

- About the middle of 1941 the Director of Naval Intelligence decided to appoint Intelligence officers to key points since, should an emergency arise, the civil officers of the administrations would have their hands full with their own affairs.
- Staff Officers (Intelligence) were therefore appointed to Rabaul, Port Moresby, Thursday Island, Tulagi, and Vila, each with his network of Coastwatchers.
- This branch of Naval Intelligence (under the supervision from Townsville of Commander Feldt with the new title of Supervising Intelligence Officer, North Eastern Area) was fully operational in anticipation of a crisis in the Pacific.



Northern Screen Coastwatcher Stations



# June 1941 - London

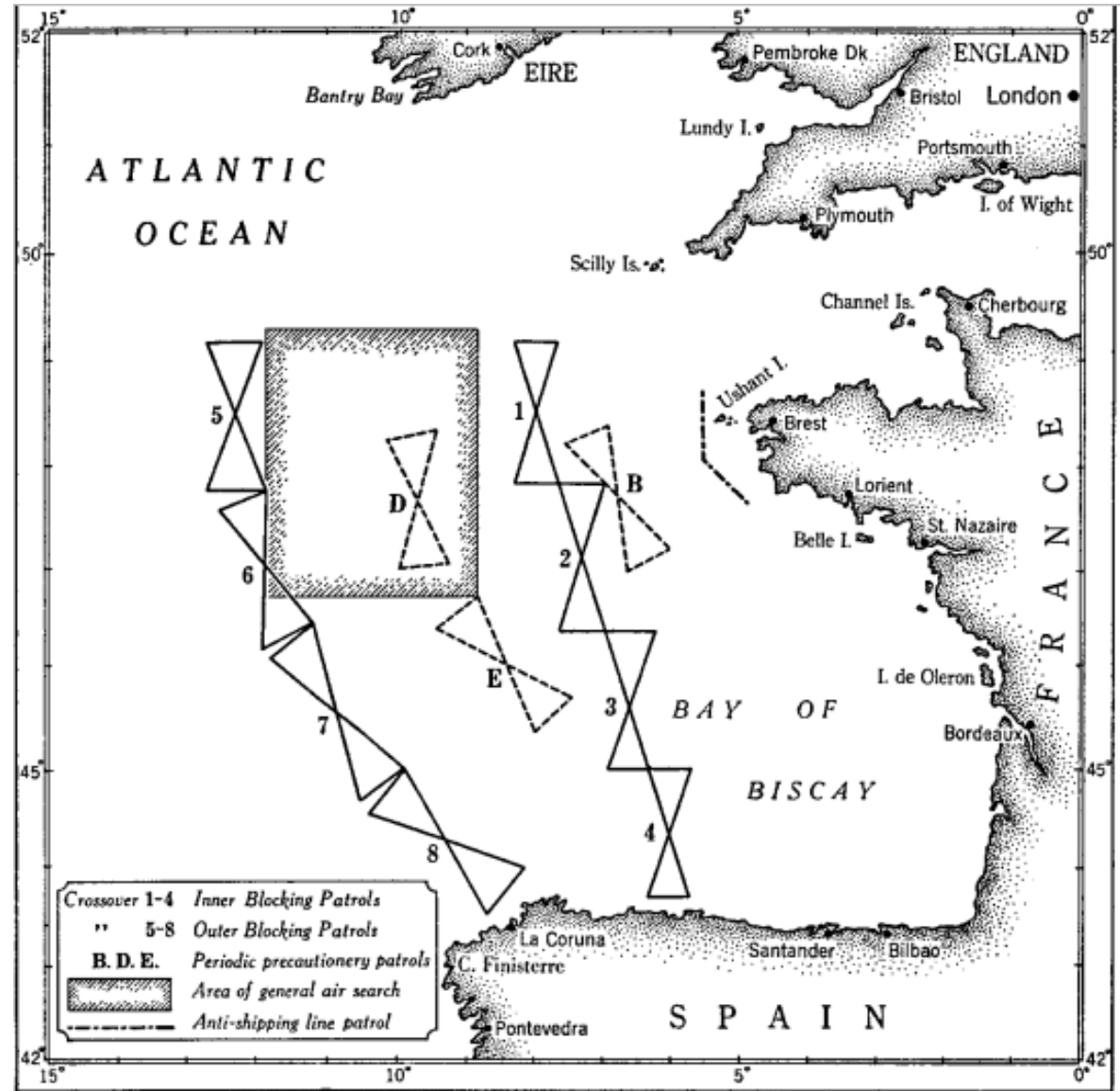
- In 13 months between the German invasion of France and June 1941 there had been 11 major and many minor directives to Bomber Command governing the operations of the strategic bomber force. Throughout this period the attack on enemy oil resources remained the basis of longer-term offensive strategy.
- However any concentrated or continuous application to this objective had been prevented firstly by the need to participate in the French campaign, then to pursue defensive aims when Britain herself was in danger of invasion and finally to attack the Uboats, surface ships and aircraft attempting to blockade Great Britain.
- There were other diversions from the main aim including attacks for political rather than military ends against Italian towns and Berlin, these political attacks gradually merging with the dispersed-effort raids, designed to unsettle the enemy, into a more ordered yet relatively undefined plan to attack German civilian morale as such.
- As a result only some 8 per cent of the total tonnage of bombs expended during this period were in fact launched against oil targets.
- The apparent impossibility of bringing decisive pressure to bear on Germany in any other way led in June 1941 to a plan for the expansion of the bomber force to 4,000 by the spring of 1943. This plan's acceptance by the War Cabinet endorsed the existing Air Ministry view that "the war can only be won by developing an overwhelming air offensive". Complementary to this desire for physical expansion was the feeling that the bomber force should concentrate on one offensive aim without any "overriding demands"

# June 1941 - London

- In June 1941 many of the main issues for bombing policy appeared to be clarified.
  - Because of enemy deployment to Russia, Britain now seemed safe from enemy invasion and freed from the main weight of air attack against her own industries.
  - German U-boat, surface ship and FW-200 attacks in the Atlantic had waned and although this was primarily due to naval counter-measures, the Air Ministry was able to claim that the pressing need for its own preoccupation to this end no longer existed.
- The requirements of defensive strategy thus being at least temporarily met, the way was clear for a single offensive policy.
- German military and political successes in south-eastern Europe had vastly improved her petrol and oil situation.
  - Oil targets in Germany were consequently no longer a profitable means of depressing enemy economic and military potential and a new target system had to be sought.
- The optimum use of the bomber force demanded that any such system be
  - one which permitted aircraft to reach it and attack during darkness even on short summer nights, and also
  - one which was so situated that bombs which missed their precise objective would not be entirely wasted but would have a secondary effect.
- A "Future Strategy Paper " produced in June at the request of the Prime Minister advocated that the short-term targets of our bombing should be:
  - (i) The German transportation system, chiefly the focal points of railways and canals.
  - (ii) German morale.

# June 1941 - Atlantic

- In all during June No. 10 Squadron flew 487 hours on 47 sorties, an improvement on the previous month's tally of 351 hours in 35 sorties, but
- although "Crossover B" was flown both by day and night no U-boats were sighted and no attempt was made by any ships of the Brest squadron to put to sea.



Planned air patrols in the Bay of Biscay, summer 1941.

COIC 29/6/41

Palau-Dilli Flight

A.L.O. Bandoeng  
0400/28Z

As the result of interception at Bandoeng, A.L.O. Bandoeng has communicated the following information which was sent from Palau to Dilli on 25th June.

The Flying Boat "SAZABANI" will leave Palau today (29th June) and return on 1st July. ✓

B. ADJACENT AREAS

DS/38 Para.B.  
Airintel Darwin ✓  
1115/30Z

PALAU-DILLI FLIGHT - The Japanese Flying Boat and tender arrived at Dilli yesterday (30th June) at 1330 and 1400 hours local time respectively.

*Ramsey* (N)

*Quinlan* (M)

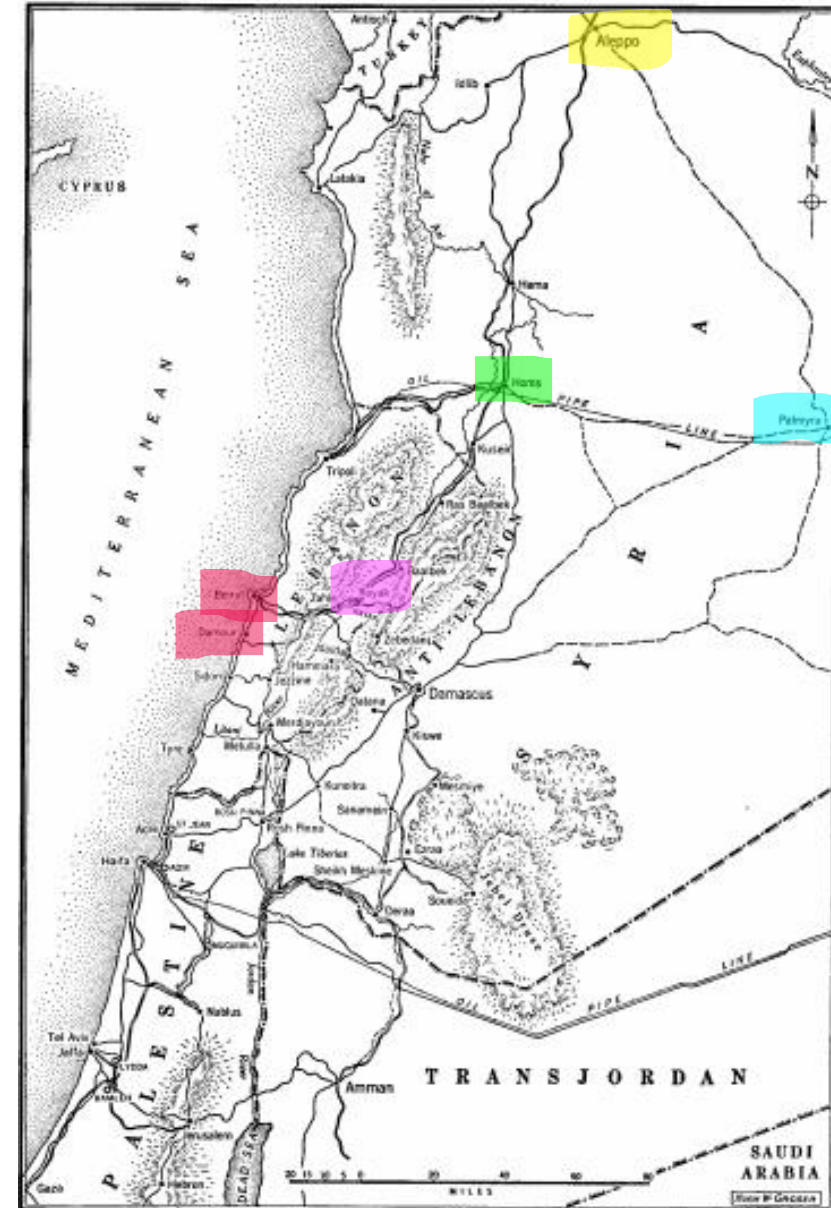
*Agneschi* (A)

C.O.I.C.

1st July, 1941

# 1 July 1941 - Syria

- On 1st July one brigade of the 10th Indian Division also began to move from Iraq up the Euphrates River towards **Aleppo**.
- Habforce captured **Palmyra** on the 3rd after a bitter defence by a small French group which held out against four regiments, and
- Legentilhomme moved against **Homs**, and
- a brigade of the 6th British Division towards **Rayak** and
- the 7th Australian Division reinforced by battalions of the 6th Australian Division prepared to assault **Damour and Beirut**.





# 1 July 1941 - Mediterranean

- Turkish permission for the passage of French troops through Turkey to Syria had been refused on 1 July.
- French hopes were now centred on the arrival of reinforcements by sea, and all available bomber and torpedo aircraft in Palestine and Transjordan Command stood by from the beginning of July to attack any Vichy convoy.



# 1 July 1941 - Britain

- While the tardy arrival of Australian personnel did impede somewhat the formation of No. 455, it was the airfield and aircraft position, especially the latter, which was the real governing factor within No. 5 Group. The Manchester aircraft with which the group was to re-equip had begun operations in February, but had given considerable trouble.
- On 1st July it was decided to ground all Manchesters. This entailed the temporary re-equipment of Manchester squadrons with Hampdens, the production of which was tapering off in favour of the heavy-bomber program. The infant No. 455 had to remain idle because there were not sufficient aircraft to arm established and experienced squadrons which had greater priority.



Avro Manchester

# 1 July 1941 - Britain

- There was also some minor difficulty in housing the squadron. A number of satellite airfields were still being developed to cope with the ever-increasing intricacy of bomber operations, and No. 455 found itself split at times between **Swinderby**, Coddington and Skellingthorpe.



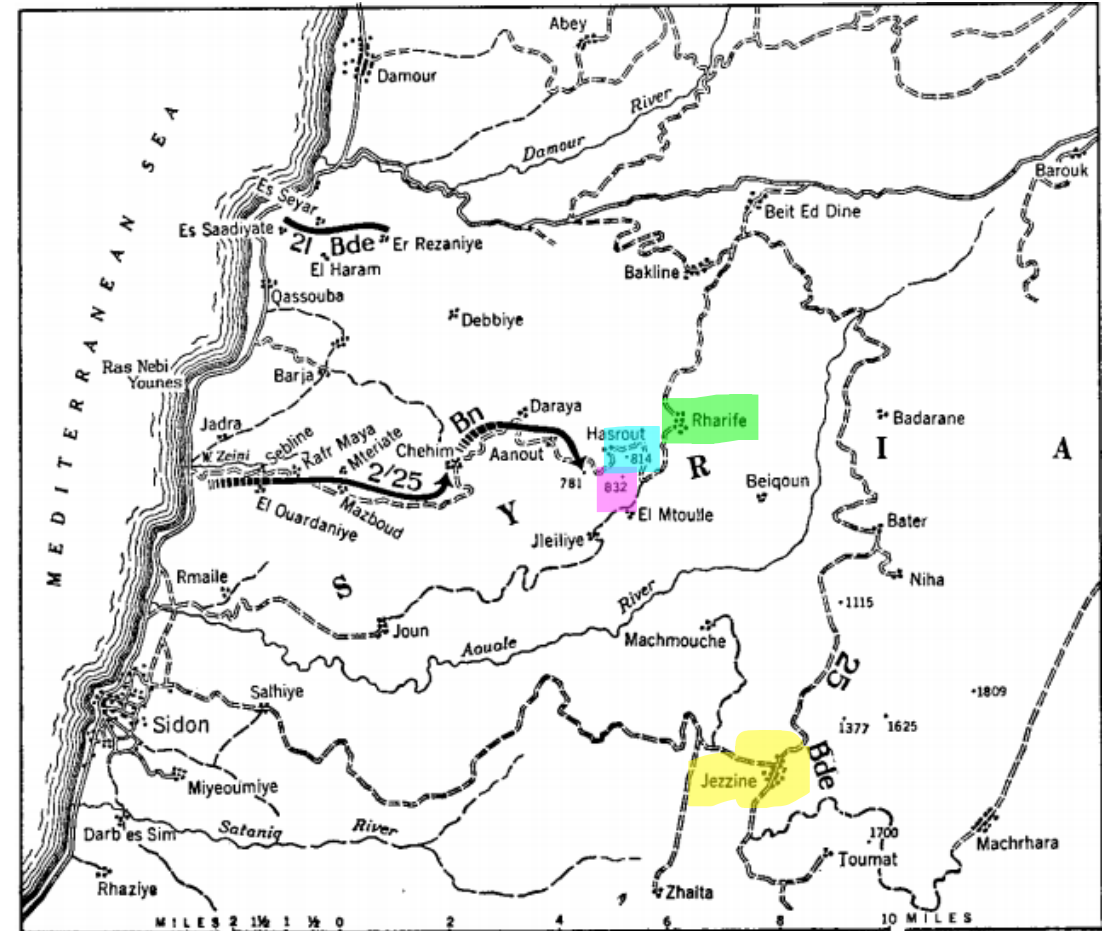
# 3 July 1941 - Syria

- The 10th Indian Division (General Slim) attacked Deir ez-Zor at 09:00 on 3 July.
- The 2/10th Gurkha Rifles attacked from the south-west. A flanking column had left Mayadin at 04:15, crossed the Palmyra road about 20 mi (32 km) from Deir ez-Zor and reached the Aleppo road by 10:30. Surprise was complete and the flanking force advanced rapidly into the city, capturing the bridges intact and destabilizing the defences facing the Gurkhas advancing from the south-east.
- By 11:00, these positions were abandoned and the two attacking forces joined up in the city. By 15:30, the last opposition in the city had been silenced although the Vichy air force continued to make telling attacks on the Allied ground forces.
- Only 100 prisoners were taken because the bulk of the Syrian troops changed into civilian clothes and merged into countryside. However, 50 trucks, nine guns and five aircraft were captured and a considerable haul of arms, ammunition and petrol was made.



# 4 July 1941 - Syria

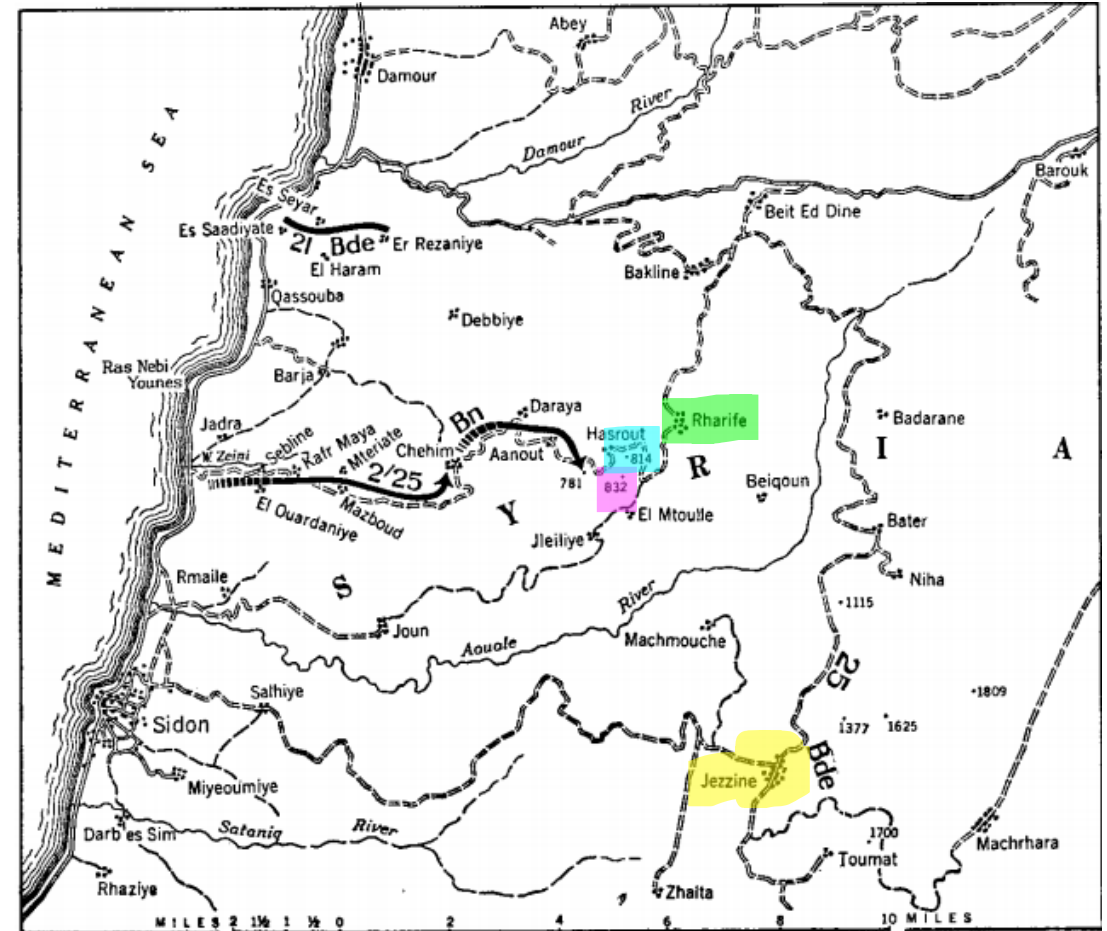
- The attack on **Rharife** by the 2/25th Battalion was to be made by Captain Marson's company, which was to cut the road north of Rharife, and Captain Kerr's, which was to capture the dominating plateau above Hasrout and occupy the town.
- A reconnaissance revealed that the enemy held the plateau.
- Kerr's company left Daraya on the night of the 3rd-4th in strong moonlight.
- After very difficult going over intervening ridges, which made it a problem to keep direction, a halt was called at midnight at the foot of the plateau. The going had been too difficult for the mules carrying the mortars, and these were sent back to battalion headquarters.





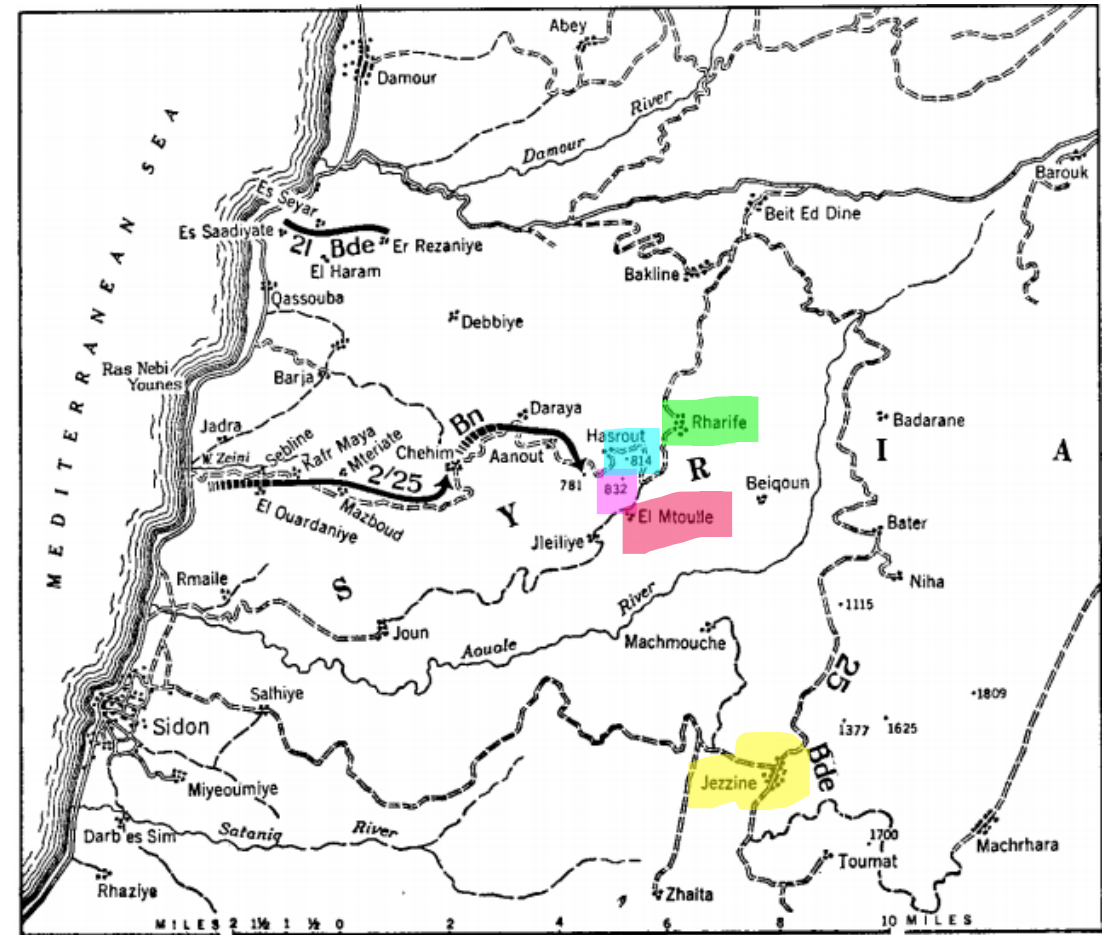
# 4 July 1941 - Syria

- The advance continued in single file at 1 a.m., but when moving up a defile almost at the crest the leading scout was set upon. He bayoneted his assailant, who gave out a blood curdling cry which awoke the defenders.
- The French were occupying the crest in a semi-circle round the Australians, and for nearly an hour poured fire from four machine-guns and small mortars on to the attackers.
- Lieutenant Crombie's platoon took up a position on the right flank and Lieutenant Miles' on the left. As dawn approached Robertson ordered a bayonet attack.
- The fixing of bayonets evidently unnerved the French and, as the attackers advanced, they fled. By 5 a.m. Crombie had occupied all Hill 814 after brief engagements, and Miles had all Hill 832.



# 4 July 1941 - Syria

- At 11.30 a.m. on the 4th the Pioneers opened an attack on **Mtoulle**. They encountered fire from field guns, mortars and machineguns, but late in the afternoon had taken the village and were in touch with the 2/25th.
- Marson took two platoons through **Rharife** where he found one Senegalese soldier who was taken prisoner and put the company in a defensive position on the road about 1,000 yards north of Rharife until the following morning, when he marched through the village again. On 4th July large numbers of French were withdrawing north-east from Mtoulle.
- On 5th July the 2/25th Battalion on the left was holding a line through Rharife, Beiqoun and Mtoulle, while the 2/31st, east of the gorge, was patrolling forward along the road leading north from Jezzine to Bater.



# 4 July 1941 - Mediterranean

- The Vichy auxiliary cruiser St Didier was sunk on 4<sup>th</sup> July off Adalia, Turkey by Fairey Albacore aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm, whilst attempting to pass herself off as a Turkish merchant ship.



Fairey Albacore

# 4 July 1941 - Germany

- Hughie Edwards joined the RAAF in 1935, and a year later was granted a short service commission with the RAF.
- In August 1938, Edwards was piloting a Blenheim when he flew into a storm at 7,500 ft. When the ailerons froze, the aircraft was forced down to 5,200 ft and Edwards ordered the navigator and rear gunner to bail out of the aircraft.
- Down to 750 ft, he made an effort to jump clear, but his parachute became entangled with the aircraft. He sustained head injuries and a badly broken leg, which after extensive surgery was left shorter than the other. He was declared unfit for flying duties.
- In April 1940 he was posted to No. 139 Squadron for active service due to the outbreak of war.



A Blenheim Mk I in formation with a Spitfire.

# 4 July 1941 - Germany

- In May 1941, Edwards became CO of No. 105 Squadron replacing the previous incumbent, who had been killed in an anti-shipping raid on Stavanger.
- The Squadron was engaged in a series of daylight operations against Germany and the occupied countries, with its principal targets being shipping, power installations, shipbuilding yards, locomotives, steelworks and marshalling yards.
- On 4 July 1941, Edwards led a daylight attack ("Operation Wreckage") against the port of Bremen, one of the most heavily defended towns in Germany.
- Edwards' force of twelve Blenheims attacked at a height of about 50 feet through telephone wires and high voltage power lines. The bombers successfully penetrated fierce anti-aircraft fire and a dense balloon barrage, but further fire over the port itself resulted in the loss of four of the attacking force.
- Waterside objectives were effectively bombed and Edwards brought his remaining aircraft safely back, although all had been hit and his own Blenheim had been hit over 20 times.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

SUK12246

In May 1944 John Curtin, met with Edwards during a visit to No. 460 Squadron RAAF at Binbrook, where Edwards was the Station Commander.



# 6 July 1941 - Syria

- No. 3 and a newly-arrived Blenheim squadron (No. 45 R.A.F.) were transferred to operate under the control of the 7th Australian Division during the battle for Damour which opened on 6th July.
- No. 3 remained at Rosh Pinna and No. 45 at Muquibila, respectively forty and seventy five miles from the Australian divisional headquarters at Sidon.



*(Air Ministry)*  
At Rosh Pinna airfield in northern Palestine during the Syrian campaign; pilots of No. 3 Squadron bivouacked in a stand of Australian eucalypts.

# 6 July 1941 - Mediterranean

- No. 10's experience was quite different to No. 3's.



Permanent barracks at Pembroke Dock, 1940.

(R.A.A.F.)

# 6 July 1941 - Syria

- Damour, the French administrative capital, is a large town on the coast approximately 30 kilometres south of Beirut.
- The Wadi Damour, with the Damour River in its bed, is three kilometres to the south of the town. These features were the last major natural obstacles south of Beirut.
- Having already captured the heights overlooking Damour on the south bank of the wadi, the plan developed by Major General Arthur "Tubby" Allen, commanding the 7th Australian Division, involved encircling the Vichy French positions at Damour.
- On the night of 5 July 1941, the operation began with troops of the 21st Brigade moving into position to cross the Damour River in two places.
- Early on 6 July, the Australians attacked Vichy French positions on the northern side. The 2/16th Battalion attacked at El Atiq. The 2/27th Battalion attacked at El Boum.



The broken bridge at the mouth of the Damour River.

# 6 July 1941 - Syria

- When the forward infantry were pinned to the ground by heavy hostile machine gun fire Lieutenant Roden Cutler went to bring a line to his outpost when he was seriously wounded. Twenty-six hours elapsed before it was possible to rescue this officer, whose wound by this time had become septic necessitating the amputation of his leg.
- By nightfall, both positions were in Australian hands.



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Cutler, seriously wounded, is carried from the battlefield by French prisoners of war.

- Thanks for your attention