

Australia's War in the Pacific 1943



11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The 7th Infantry Division (Maj. Gen. Albert E. Brown), then stationed near Fort Ord, California, was selected to recapture Attu.
- Because of its location near the coast, it could readily undergo the amphibious training required for its new mission.
- After completing that training during April 1943, they embarked from San Francisco on transports.
- Arriving at windswept, partially snow-covered Fort Randall (Cold Bay) on the 30th, the troops spent the next four days on the crowded transports.
- The cold, damp Aleutian weather as far different from the warm California beaches they had just left. Because of shortages in cold weather equipment, moreover, most of the men would enter combat wearing normal field gear.
- While senior commanders realized that the troops would suffer from the weather, most believed that within three days the fight for Attu would be over, particularly since the assembled naval support for the landings included three battleships along with several cruisers and destroyers.



Major General Brown at the invasion of Attu, Alaska, May 1943.

11 May 43 - Aleutians

- Attu is 35 miles long and 15 miles wide, with snow-capped peaks that reach upward to 3,000 feet.
- Steep slopes extend down from the peaks to treeless valleys below, carpeted with muskeg, a "black muck" covered with a dense growth of lichens and moss.
- Because the Japanese current has a moderating effect on temperatures, much of the time in the outermost Aleutians the muskeg is barely firm enough for a man to cross on foot.
- The same current accounts for the pea-soup fogs, the constant pervading wetness, and the frequent storms that make the outer Aleutians so forbidding.



Attu village at Chichagof Harbor in 1937. It was occupied by the Japanese in 1942/43.

11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The 7th Scout Company was to land from the submarines on **Beach Scarlet** at 0300, followed by the 7th Reconnaissance Troop from the Kane.
- Battalion Combat Team 17-1 was to lie off Holtz Bay in the Bell, awaiting developments. The other three combat teams were to land in **Massacre Bay** at 0740. It was necessary to divide the task force into two groups for the approach. This entailed considerable shifting of units, and was carried out with great difficulty in the all-pervading fog.
- During these maneuvers the Sicard and MacDonough collided, with the result that the services of these vessels were lost. The Sicard was to have been boat control ship in the Holtz Bay area.
- Unavoidable delays necessitated the postponement of H-hour to **0940**, and finally to **1040**. Had it not been for SG radar equipment, any formation of approach divisions would have been impossible, according to Capt. Corn, commanding officer of the Pennsylvania. "The SG radar," he added, "is essential for combatant ships operating in the Aleutian area. The SG radar repeater (PPI) installed on the navigation bridge was invaluable."



11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The approach was uneventful, but arrival off Attu took place in dense fog, contrary to a weather forecast, promising clear skies. At 03.09 the Narwhal disembarked her detachment of the 7th Scout Company, and a few minutes later cleared the beach and returned.
- At 05.10 the Nautilus reported that she also had safely landed her part of the 7th Scout Company at **Beach Scarlet**.
- The Kane, however, which was scheduled to follow with the Reconnaissance Troop, was unable to locate the beach and had to be supplied distance and bearing by the Pennsylvania's radar.
- The hour finally selected for the main northern landing was 1450 and the place **Beach Red**. A few boats from the Bell had already followed the scout boat in, and now the remainder of Combat Team 17-1 went ashore.



11 May 43 - Aleutians

- Because of the atrocious visibility conditions, no direct gunfire support of the northern landings was possible for fear of hitting boats and troops.
- The Pennsylvania and Idaho, however, began a bombardment of the Chichagof area at 151(?) to neutralize enemy batteries. Radar control was used, and fire was maintained for an hour.



The battleship Pennsylvania bombards Attu during landing operations on 11 May 1943.

11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The main landings at **Massacre Bay** proved difficult in the extreme. There were many vaguely charted foul areas which were only partially defined by incomplete information collected in 1934.
- The charts showed a track through the bay and stated that no soundings of less than nine fathoms had been discovered. The first wave was to be preceded by long-range battleship bombardment.
- Thereafter two destroyers were to enter the bay at either end of the track charted nine years earlier by the Quail, close the beaches to give gunfire support, and retire at the opposite end of the track.
- If visibility was low, which it definitely was, there was danger of collision between the destroyers. Bad weather forced cancellation of this portion of the plan.



11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The duties of the control vessel Pruitt were further complicated by the visibility. Having no SG radar, the Pruitt had to be conned in by the Dewey.
- At 0815 the transports stopped in the transport area. The Pruitt closed the Zeilin to within 300 yards, but visual communication was often impossible. Boats were lowered, while the Pruitt stood off and awaited the formation of waves. At 1020 the Harris boat group commander reported. The Zeilin group was then mustered and accounted for, except for 6 LCPs which were lost in the fog. They finally rejoined at 1355. H-hour was then scheduled for 1530.
- At 1410 the Pruitt got underway and headed for the point of departure at 6.5 knots. The fog made it difficult to keep the boat waves in sight, and one of them was soon lost, despite the sounding of "Charlie" on the Pruitt's whistle every minute. The group commander was sent back to round the waves up, and the formation lay to from 1422 to 1449 while this was being accomplished. At 1515, on word from the Dewey, which was navigating by SG radar, the Pruitt started deploying the boats in attack formation. At 1520 the Pruitt reached the point of departure, stopped, and planted a buoy. Visibility had not improved. No land was in sight.



The destroyer Pruitt guides landing craft toward the beach at Massacre Bay, Attu.

11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The first wave of 12 LCPs was sent off for Beaches Yellow and Blue on course 320° T., the heading which the ship was maintaining at anchor with the engines. At 1530 the second wave of 13 LCPs was dispatched to the main landing places. A few minutes later the following message was received from the first wave: "Hit brick wall, what do?" It was thought that the wave had run into the foul area to the east of the objective, so it was instructed to turn left, which proved to be correct.
- At 1550 the third wave of ten LCPs went in. Thereupon the Pruitt requested Admiral Rockwell's permission to advance within sight of the beach in order to overcome the persistent tendency of coxswains to steer off course to the right. Lacking SG radar, the Pruitt had been prevented by the fog from tracking the boats in more than 300-400 yards and had been unable to coach the wave commander by reference to prominent landmarks.



11 May 43 - Aleutians

- The request was granted. At 1606 the beach was sighted, and, with typical Aleutian fickleness, visibility suddenly lifted to 1,500 yards. Other waves were then dispatched. At 1620 word was received that the first two waves had landed without resistance. Soon radio communications with the beachmaster were established.
- By 1640 all the remaining waves had landed. The Pruitt waited until 1732, when the empty boats had closed her and been accounted for, and then returned to the transport area with the assistance of coacting by the Dewey.
- The task force commander was informed that six waves had landed at Beach Blue, three at Beach Yellow, and one at Beach Rainbow. No opposition had been encountered anywhere.
- By 2130, 1,100 troops were ashore at Red beach, 2,000 at Yellow and Blue, and 400 at Scarlet.



Soldiers unloading landing craft on the beach at Massacre Bay, Attu.

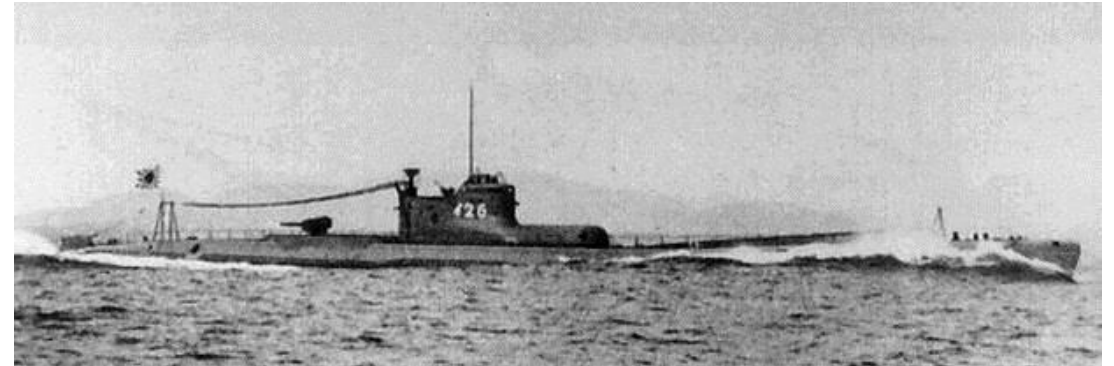
11 May 43 - Aleutians

- On the northern front, the 1st Battalion was close to Hill X and within twenty-four hours the 32nd Regiment, with its 1st and 3d Battalions, was due to arrive from Adak.
- In the southern sector, the 2d Battalion of the 17th reported that it was within 1,000 yards of Sarana Pass, and the 3d Battalion indicated that it was about 600 yards short of Jarmin Pass.
- The next day, the 2d Battalion, 32d Regiment, on ship in Massacre Bay, was to come ashore to reinforce the 17th Regiment.
- Everything considered, it would not have been unreasonable to suppose that within a few days Attu would be taken.



12 May

- The Japanese submarine, I-31, was depth charged, shelled and sunk in the Pacific 5 nautical miles (9.3 km) north east of Chichagof Harbor, Attu Island, Alaska, United States (52°08'S 177°38'E) by USS Edwards with the loss of all 95 hands.
- The Celebes Maru No. 1-class navy transport, Sumatra Maru (5,857 tons), was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean in a shallow water cove off Bulusan, Luzon, Philippines (12°44'N 124°08'E) by USS Gudgeon.



Sister ship I-26. Type B1 had a surfaced displacement of 2,589 tons, max speed surfaced 23.5 knots, range 14,000 nmi at 16 knots, 6 * 21 inch torpedo tubes, diving depth of 100 metres.

12 May

- "PG50" , of eleven merchant ships escorted by H.M.A. Ships Colac, Bendigo, Moresby and Ballarat, from Brisbane to Sydney formed up in Moreton Bay at 3.15 p.m. on the 11th.
- At 2.12 p.m. on the 12th, when off Coff's Harbour —and when the convoy had the additional protection of air escort—the Australian ship Ormiston (en route Brisbane to Sydney with General Cargo) was struck by a torpedo which exploded and badly holed the port side of No. 1 hold.
- The ship, however, remained afloat and able to manoeuvre under her own power, and Ballarat escorted her to Coff's Harbour while Moresby searched unsuccessfully for the attacker, and Colac and Bendigo continued with the convoy.
- Another Australian ship in this convoy, Caradale (1,881 tons), was also hit by a torpedo from the salvo fired in this attack; but it failed to explode, and did no damage.



SS Ormiston had been operated on the Australian coast since 1927 by the Australian United Steam Navigation Co Ltd of Melbourne (AUSN)

12 May - Wau

- Next morning (12 May), when the 2/3rd Independent Company opened fire on 80 Japanese moving south along the Komiatum Track, the enemy retaliated with a mountain gun. A new weapon in the experience of the 2/3rd, its distinctive sound effects were a little disconcerting.
- The sappers duly reciprocated with their Vickers.
- Eventually these broadsides across the ravine between Komiatum Ridge and Bobdubi Ridge subsided—in both cases probably for lack of ammunition.
- Lieutenant Jeffery's section east of Bobdubi Ridge astride the Missim-Salamaua track repulsed sharp Japanese attacks on the 12th.



A Type 41 75-mm Mountain Gun of the Imperial Japanese Army, carried by its crew.

12 May 43 - Aleutians

- The next day, with naval and air support, Brown's men continued their two-pronged attack toward **Jarmin Pass**.
- Frontal assaults from Massacre Bay by the 17th Infantry failed to gain ground. As patrols probed to develop enemy positions, the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, came ashore at Massacre Bay.
- In the northern sector, the 1st Battalion, finding the enemy dug in on **Hill X**, made a double envelopment which succeeded in gaining a foothold on the crest of the hill, but the Japanese held firm on the reverse slope.
- That night the first casualty report of the operation revealed that forty-four Americans had been killed since the start of the invasion.



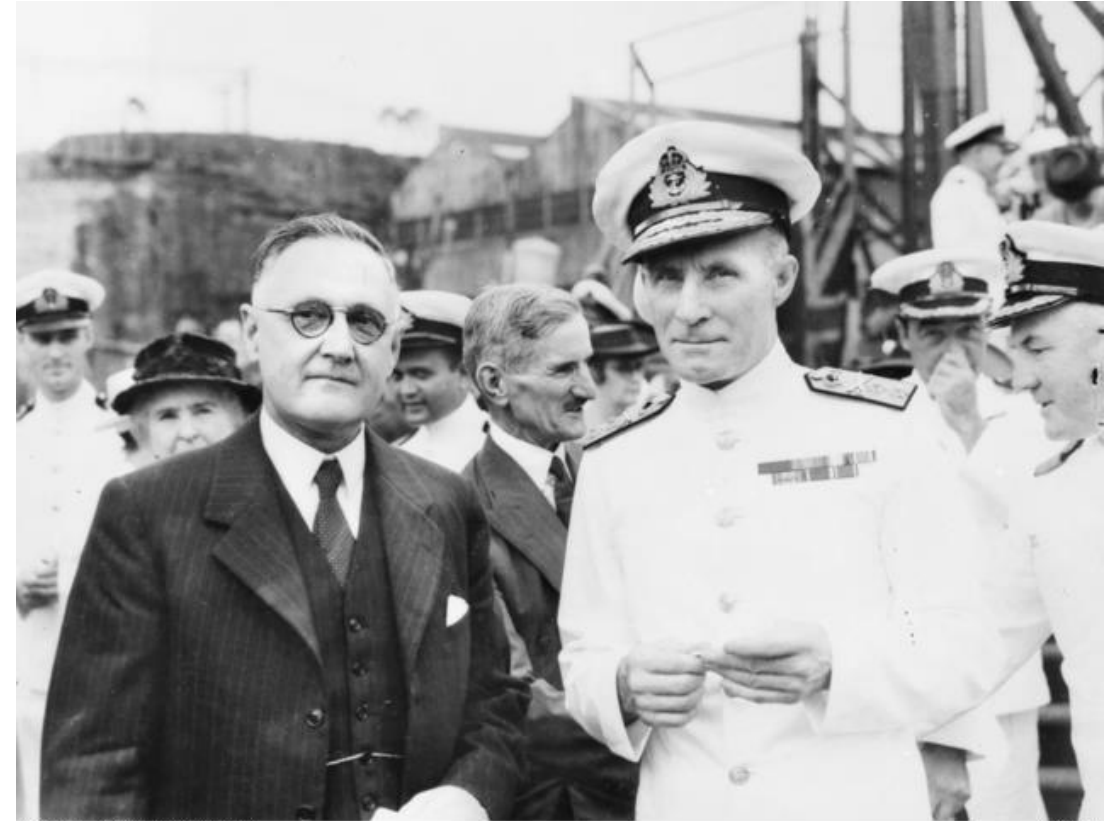
13 May COIC

(2) China Strait - Further to the claim by SC.747 at 0715/11 that she had sunk an enemy submarine S.W. of China Strait, a report from the Beaufort which saw three torpedoes fired at "VAN DER LIJN", under escort of SC.747 approximately 30 miles S.W. of China Strait, is now to hand. All three torpedoes missed, and one was observed to explode at the end of its run. At 0625/11 SC.747 dropped four depth charges, and advised the Beaufort that she considered she had sunk the submarine and asked if any wreckage was visible, to which a negative reply was given. SC.747 dropped four more depth charges at 0639. The Beaufort searched the area and reported no submarine.

At 0850, SC.747 reported a further contact 25 miles S.W. of China Strait and dropped four depth charges. The Beaufort searched the area, and reported sighting no submarine although the water was clear. 30 to 40 sharks were sighted 100 yards from the position of depth charging and may possibly have caused the indication. The aircraft report states that it is doubtful that this indication emanated from a submarine.

13 May - Sea

- On 13th May Admiral Royle, told the Advisory War Council that, following representations by the Shipping Control Board and the Department of Commerce, it had been decided to revert to double convoys, each of which would be provided with four escort vessels, "the maximum protection that could be provided with present resources".



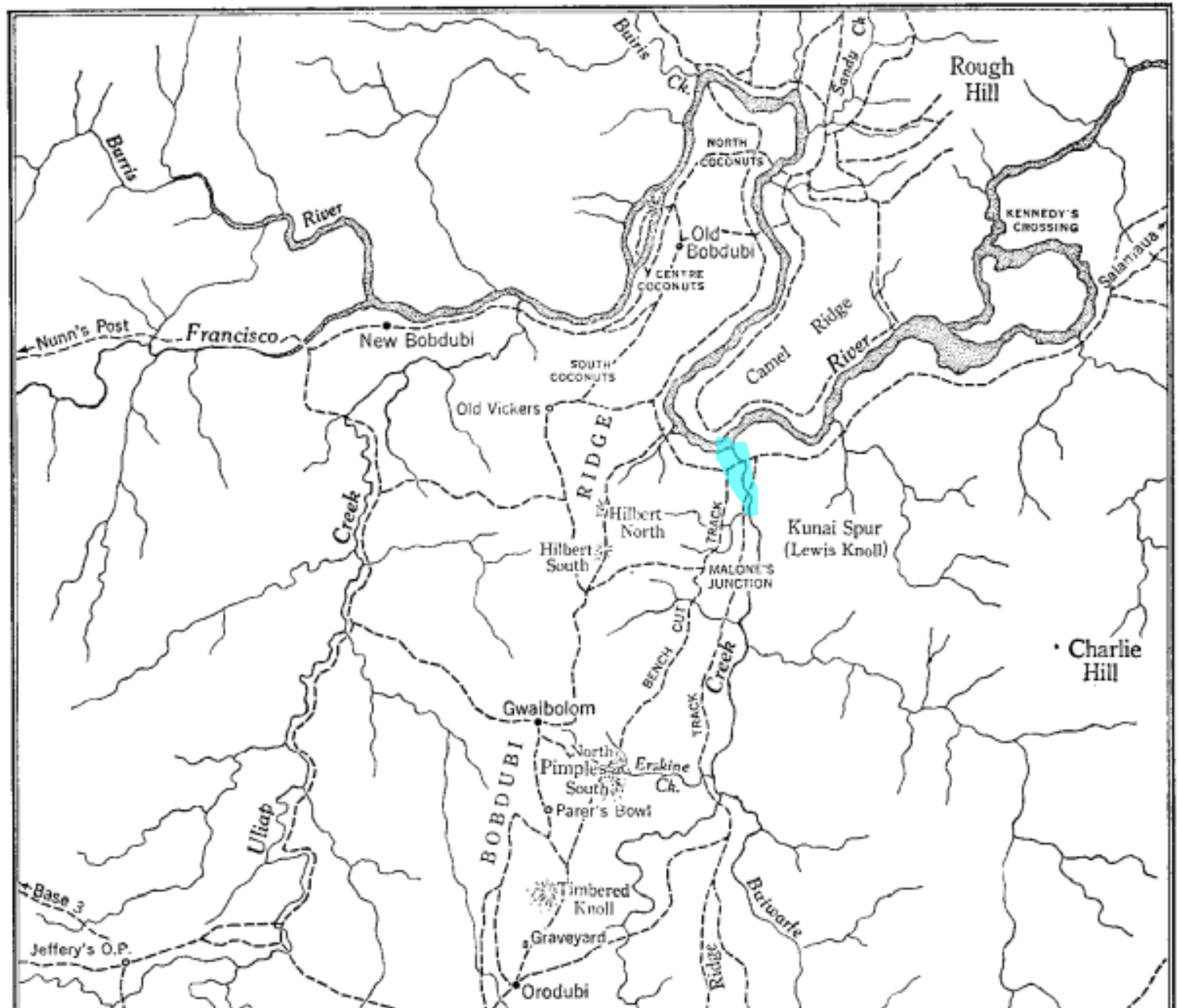
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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LAUNCHING OF H.M.I.S. MADRAS. THE MINISTER FOR THE NAVY (MR. MAKIN) WITH VICE-ADMIRAL SIR GUY ROYLE.

13 May - Wau

- Lieutenant Jeffery's section east of Bobdubi Ridge astride the Missim-Salamaua track again repulsed sharp Japanese attacks on the 13th.



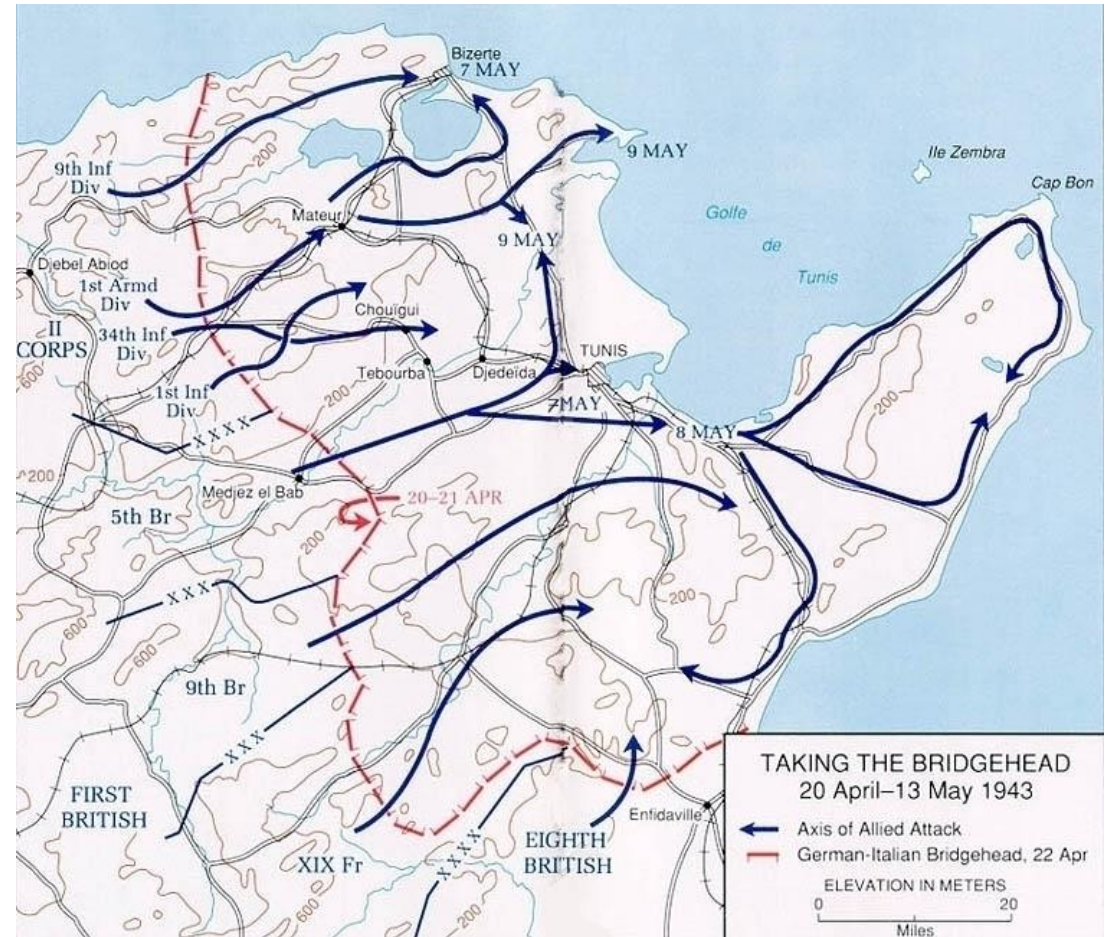
13 May 43 - Aleutians

- Further efforts of the Massacre Bay force on the 13th to gain Jarmin Pass again failed, even with the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, entering the fight to reinforce the 3d Battalion, 17th Regiment.
- As U.S. losses continued to mount, front-line positions remained about the same as those gained on D-day.
- Vicious and costly fighting occurred to the north as the enemy attempted to drive the 1st Battalion troops from Hill X, but the crest remained firmly in American hands at nightfall.
- The 3d Battalion, 32d Regiment, by then had landed on Beach RED and was moving forward to reinforce the hard-pressed 1st Battalion on Hill X.
- Naval gunfire and air support of the ground troops continued insofar as weather conditions allowed.



13 May - Africa

- At the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942 British Commonwealth forces commanded by General Montgomery inflicted a decisive defeat on Rommel's Afrika Korps and then pursued its remnants into Tunisia.
- Following the Anglo-American landings (Operation Torch) in North-West Africa in November 1942, and subsequent battles against Vichy France forces (who then changed sides), the Allies advanced into Tunisia from the west.
- The Allied armies squeezed the Axis forces into the north eastern tip of Tunisia and on 13 May 1943 forced them to surrender, collecting over 275,000 Italian and German prisoners of war.



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HALSEY CONFERS WITH MACARTHUR

Pacific Chiefs Plan United Action: Met In Australia

GENERAL MacArthur, Allied Commander in the South-West Pacific, and Admiral Halsey, Commander in the South Pacific, have just completed an important conference in Australia. This is reported by Osmar White, Courier-Mail war correspondent in the South Pacific, who says that the meeting was directly related to Allied offensive plans in the Pacific, particularly New Guinea and the Solomons.

The announcement coincides with news from Washington that Dr. Ewart, Australian envoy to America and Britain, has been called into the Washington talks between Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt.

Dr. Ewart has conferred with Mr. Churchill and will take part in talks next week with Mr. Churchill, Mr. Roosevelt, and the Canadian Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King).

The Courier-Mail's Washington correspondent says that Dr. Ewart's swift summons to the White House is a guarantee that the importance of the Pacific will be fully weighed at the most momentous of all Churchill-Roosevelt conferences.

General White says that the announcement from South Pacific headquarters that the Pacific Chiefs are planning a united action is a development of great importance. It is a development which will be of great importance to the Pacific war effort.

The Pacific Chiefs are planning a united action in the Pacific. This is a development which will be of great importance to the Pacific war effort.

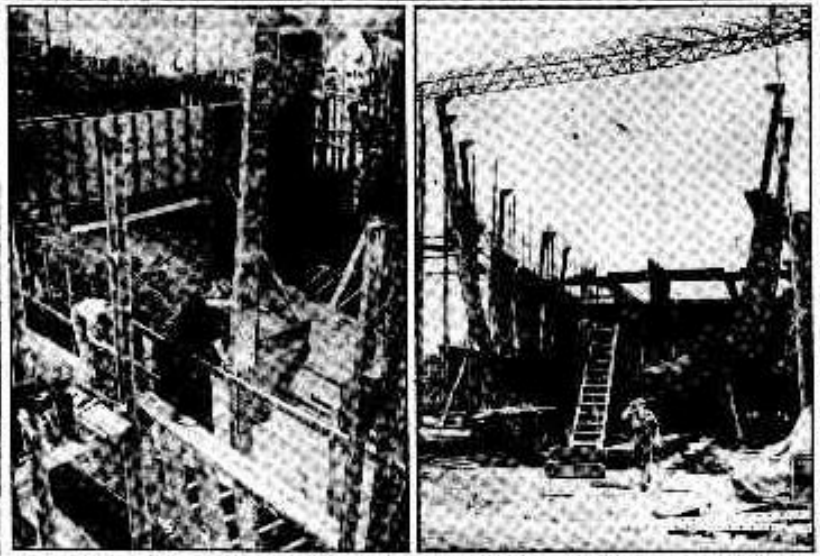
"Pool Of Strength"

My personal interpretation of the present command position is that forces now congregated in the South Pacific constitute "floating pool strength," says White.

White, chief of General MacArthur's staff, has maintained a position in the South Pacific for some time. He has been a key figure in the Pacific war effort.

PLANS FOR DIRECT HIT AT JAPAN?

LONDON, May 13 (Special)—Plans for a direct hit at Japan are being considered by the Pacific Chiefs. This is a development which will be of great importance to the Pacific war effort.



SHIP'S BIRTH.—Huge steel ribs go into place as a new 10,000-ton merchant ship is being constructed at an Australian shipyard. At night the ship begins to take shape; view of the bow in its early stages.

N. AFRICA NOW BASE FOR FURTHER ATTACK

THE Allies in Tunisia have taken more than 150,000 prisoners, great masses of equipment, more than 1000 guns, 250 tanks and many thousands of motor vehicles.

This was announced in the House of Commons by the deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee), who said that the end of the campaign had come more swiftly and more completely than expected.

Radio War Step To Invasion?

LONDON, May 13 (Special)—The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has announced that it will be broadcasting a radio message from the British Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill) to the German people. This is a development which will be of great importance to the British war effort.

R.A.F. STRIKES AT RUHR IN BIGGEST RAID

BRITISH bombers made the war's greatest air raid on Germany on Wednesday night. They struck principally at Duisburg, Germany's biggest inland port and key communications centre.

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TURNING ON ITALIANS

With the Tunisian air battle ended, the air battle of the Mediterranean has opened. This is a development which will be of great importance to the Mediterranean war effort.

Ice Peril In Ship Lanes

OTTAWA, May 13 (Special)—A warning has been issued that ice may be encountered in the shipping lanes between the Arctic and the Atlantic. This is a development which will be of great importance to the shipping industry.

RED ARMY HAMMERS

RUSSIAN tanks and infantry have been reported to have broken through the German lines in the East. This is a development which will be of great importance to the Russian war effort.

14 May- Brisbane

N. AFRICA NOW BASE FOR FURTHER ATTACK

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Radio War Step To Invasion?

LONDON, May 13 (Special and A.A.P.).—Four words—"Yesterday Africa, Europe to-morrow"—are being drummed into the ears of French listeners from North African radio stations.

This was announced in the House of Commons by the deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee), who said that the end of the campaign had come more swiftly and more completely than expected.

Cheers greeted the deputy Prime Minister when he formally announced the end of the campaign.

Mr. Attlee said: "The enemy is not only beaten but completely destroyed. The continent of Africa is cleansed entirely of all Nazi and Fascist infection."

The occupation of North Africa is not the end. North Africa now is a forward base from which will be launched at the right moment further attacks on the Axis.

A special communique from Allied Headquarters announced that organised resistance except by isolated enemy pockets had ceased.

The communique announced the capture of General von Arnim, Commander of the German Afrika Korps.

Besides von Arnim, 11 other German and Italian generals were captured, including Major-General von Speneck, commanding the 19th German Light Infantry Division, Major-General Kroich, commanding the 10th German

R.A.F. STRIKES AT RUHR IN BIGGEST RAID

BRITISH bombers made the war's greatest air raid on Germany on Wednesday night. They struck principally at Duisburg, Germany's biggest inland port and key communications centre.

British United Press says that the bomb load dropped may have reached 2000 tons.

Thirty-four of the raiders are missing. Visibility was good.

Previous biggest raid was the 1000-bomber attack on Cologne last June. Fifteen hundred tons of bombs were dropped then and 44 bombers were lost.

"Preliminary reports indicate excellent results," said the Air Ministry communique announcing Wednesday night's attack.

Berlin radio yesterday morning admitted the attack.

Berlin said: "British bombers attacked West Germany last night. High explosives and incendiaries damaged buildings and residential quarters. At least 15 raiders were shot down."

The Press Association's aeronautical correspondent said that this was the heaviest ever for tonnage of bombs dropped, but not necessarily in the number of planes used.

out that the loss of 34 planes was not heavy in view of the big forces employed.

Australian torpedo-carrying Hampdens, escorted by Beau-fighters, hit and left sinking an enemy supply ship off the Norwegian coast late on Wednesday afternoon. All the planes returned.

Flight-Lieutenant H. E. Rutledge, of Brisbane, took part.

Members of an Australian Mosquito squadron attacked five trains in occupied France on Wednesday. Warrant Officer V. P. Ratcliffe, of Randwick, said that he hit one locomotive with cannon fire. He saw it pull up and steam rise 100ft.

Flying Officer C. Panitz, of Queensland, saw bits fly from a locomotive he attacked.

Other Australians in the operations included Flight Sergeant R. C. Lowther, of Brisbane.

German raiders bombed an East Anglian coast town from roof-top level on Wednesday night. They wrecked several buildings and

14 May - Sea

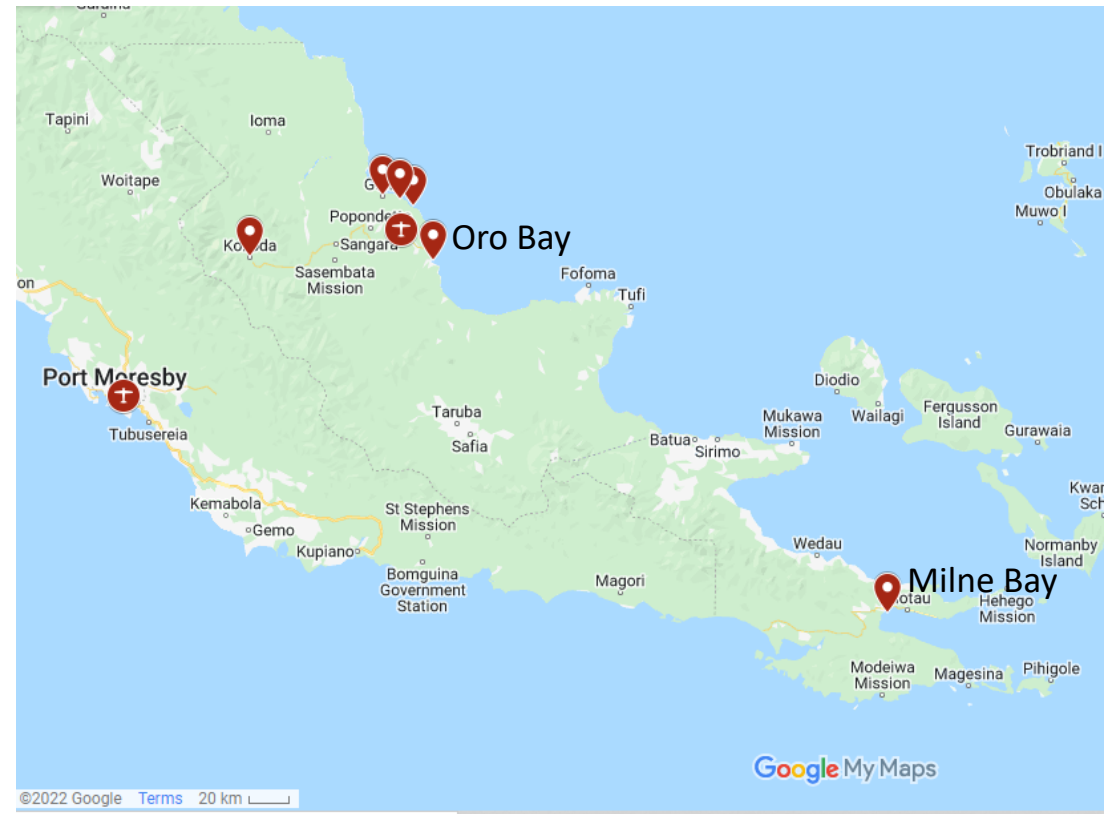
- The Ro-100-class submarine, Ro-102, was sunk in the Pacific 5 nautical miles (9.3 km) west of Lae, New Guinea by USS PT-150 and USS PT-152. Lost with all 42 hands.
- The Ro-100-class was a point-defence coastal submarine of 795 tonnes displacement. Compared with the I class fleet submarines, which displaced 2,600 tonnes.



Ro-101 in 1943.

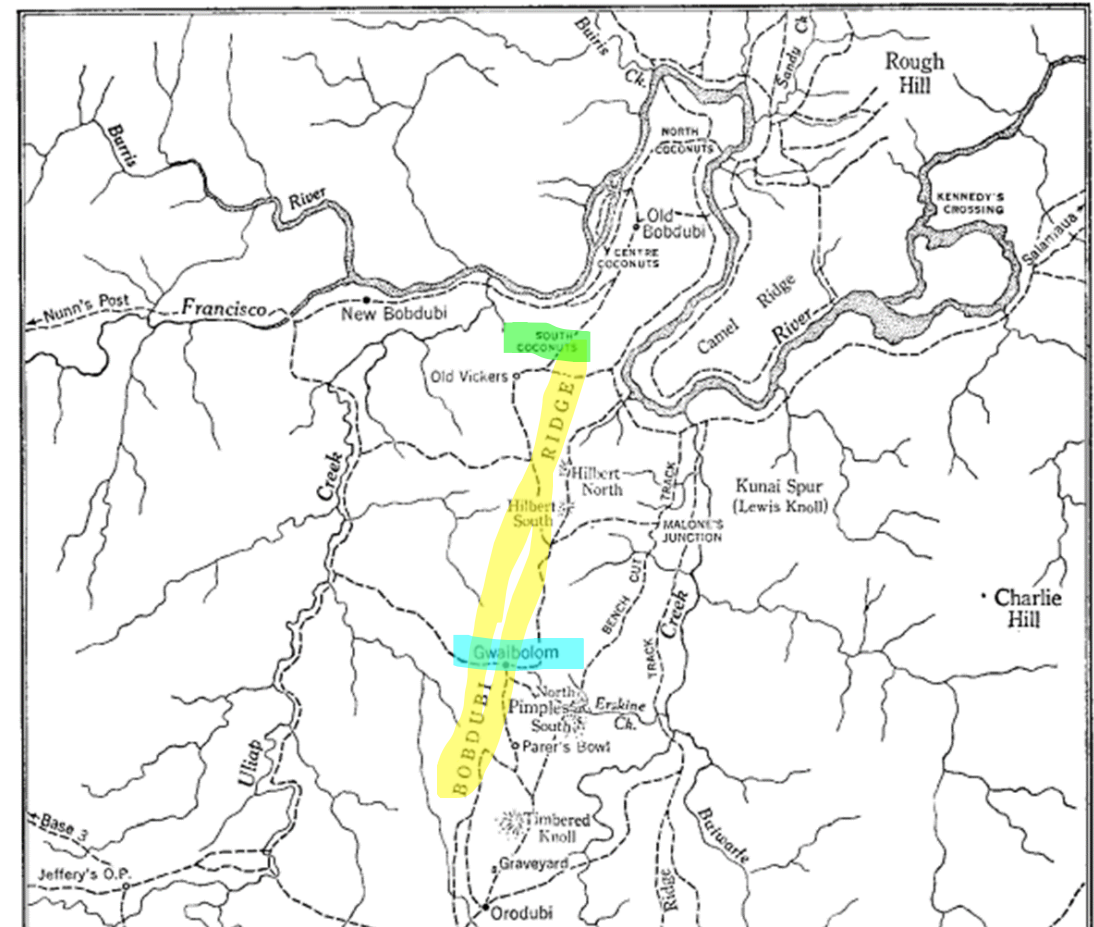
14 May - Air

- Oro Bay was visited by 20 bombers and 20 to 25 fighters in the forenoon of 14th May, and bombs were dropped there and on near-by Port Harvey.
- A bitumen dump was set on fire and a petrol-laden barge destroyed; three soldiers were killed and 12 injured.
- About 40 Allied fighters intercepted the raiders and claimed to have shot down seven bombers and nine fighters for the loss of one fighter.
- The raid occurred "between visits" of LILLIPUT stages. SC750, US submarine chaser (1942), 95 tons, one 40-mm gun, 20 kts, escorting Reijnst, had just left for Milne Bay, and at about the time of the raid Thedens (2,071 tons), escorted by Bowen, was leaving Milne Bay for Oro Bay; so LILLIPUT did not suffer on this occasion.



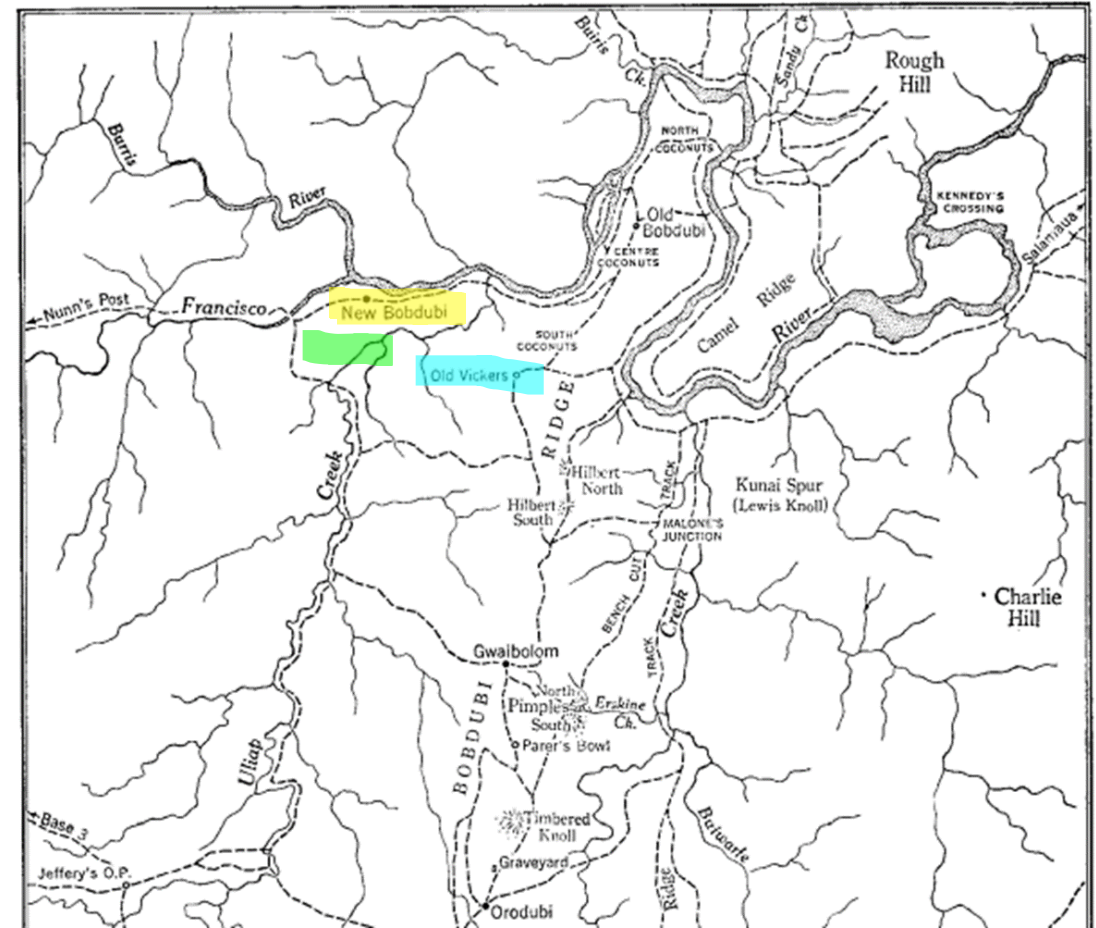
14 May - Wau

- At 9 a.m. on 14th May, the Japanese sent a reconnaissance plane over Bobdubi Ridge, and at 12.15 p.m. began heavy shelling and mortaring of the Independent Company's positions on the ridge.
- At 12.20, the Japanese, advancing along the Salamaua-Bobdubi track, ran into Jeffery's booby-traps.
- The section engaged the enemy, numbering between 100 and 200, but overwhelming odds forced the Australians to withdraw step by step to South Coconuts.
- Between 12.45 and 4 p.m. the length of Bobdubi Ridge was heavily engaged by an 8-inch gun, sited east of Kela Hill, and mortars near the junction of the Salamaua-Bobdubi-Komiatum tracks.
- By 4 p.m. fighting was taking place at numerous points from the north foot of Bobdubi Ridge to Gwaibolom, a distance of 2,300 yards.
- The remainder of the Japanese force, estimated at one battalion, fanned out after passing the track junction.
- At 3.30 p.m. Lieutenant Stephens' section was ordered to try to outflank the enemy's left flank, while a section under Sergeant Carr was ordered to attack the enemy's right.



14 May - Wau

- Before this movement could begin Captain Meares' headquarters on Old Vickers was overrun by about 200 Japanese advancing from a southerly direction and withdrew to the flat ground south of New Bobdubi, covering approaches from the south.
- Carr's attempt to move downstream along the Francisco River and turn the enemy's right flank was frustrated when he encountered a large enemy force which caused him to withdraw and secure the track at the foot of the north end of Bobdubi Ridge.
- Stephens was withdrawn to Warfe's headquarters at New Bobdubi to guard the Kunda bridge and cover any withdrawal.
- When it became apparent that the Japanese were moving north down the ridge from Old Vickers and would probably then attack towards the kunda bridge, Warfe decided that retention of his positions would cause heavy casualties, and that he would have to withdraw his five attacking sections across the bridge.



14 May - Wau

- At 5 p.m. he ordered the withdrawal of all valuable stores from the Bobdubi area west across the kunda bridge.
- As the Australians would have to fight until dusk to get their stores across the Francisco, Captain Hancock, at 5.30 p.m., led sections commanded by Lieutenants Leviston and Allen into a counter-attack from north to south up Bobdubi Ridge.
- Meeting severe small arms fire at close range and heavy mortar fire from the south, the sections were unable to move forward and Hancock held them at Centre Coconuts with the other two sections now concentrated there. This force held its ground until nightfall, and suffered casualties.
- Enemy pressure was severe and the position could only have been held longer at serious cost. Warfe therefore ordered the withdrawal of the company to the kunda bridge area. By 8.30 p.m. all sections and valuable stores had been extricated.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P03412.003

Captain Robert Norman Hancock, 2/3rd Independent Company of Bacchus Marsh, Vic. Awarded a Military Cross for his role in a series of actions against the Japanese on Bobdubi Ridge,

14 May - Wau

- Warfe estimated the Japanese casualties at 72 against 3 Australians killed and 8 wounded.
- Late that night Warfe again received instructions from Savige (photo) to avoid casualties.
- Savige warned that an unknown number of aircraft had landed at Lae during the afternoon of 14th May and might be used against the company next day. At the same time Savige asked New Guinea Force for an air strike on the aircraft at Lae on the night 14th-15th May or at first light on the 15th.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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14 May 43 - Aleutians

- Weather as well as the enemy continued to frustrate the American advance. Although surface ships continued to bombard reported enemy positions ashore on the 14th, close air support was extremely limited due to incessant fog that engulfed the island.
- Brown ordered a combined attack by his North and South Landing Forces, by then each with three battalions. While the South Landing Force attempted to inch forward up Massacre Valley to gain the pass, North Landing Force was to drive the enemy off the reverse slope of Hill X, continue on to seize Moore Ridge, and then take Jarmin Pass from the rear.
- Each attack quickly bogged down. In the northern sector the provisional battalion that had landed on Beach SCARLET remained checked, unable to break out to reach the immobile 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry, and when 3d Battalion, 32d Regiment, failed to reach its assault positions in time, Brown cancelled the combined attack.
- That evening in a report to higher headquarters, he summarized the four days of fighting, concluding that "progress through passes will, unless we are extremely luck(y), be slow and costly, and will require troops in excess to those now available to my command."



15 May - Sea

- At 2 p.m. on the 15th USS Mugford was escorting the British steamer Sussex (11,063 tons) clear of Australian coastal waters on a trans-Tasman voyage. An RAAF Avro Anson was providing A.S.V. protection.
- A lookout in the destroyer reported an object ahead on the horizon, and "shortly thereafter the plane was seen to dive toward the object previously reported and headed toward Mugford signalling "Rescue survivors in water ahead".
- From the survivors on the first group of rafts Lieut-Commander Corey, Mugford's captain, learned that they were from the Australian hospital ship Centaur.
- He requested the aircraft to cover Sussex until well clear while he proceeded with rescue and signalled the N.O.I.C. Brisbane that Mugford was 40 miles east of Cape Moreton and was picking up many survivors of the Australian hospital ship Centaur, which had sunk at 4 a.m. on the 14th. "More details later."
- The work of rescue proceeded "amidst the usual flurry of reported 'periscopes', 'disturbed water', 'torpedo wakes'. Although none proved authentic, minimum time was spent stopped ."



15 May - Sea

- The survivors were in two large groups plus three smaller groups in about a two mile radius of oil slick, wreckage and debris. Regular gas drum rafts, hatch tops, cabin tops, gratings, large shelf structures, and one wrecked lifeboat (awash) had been used by the survivors, many lightly clothed, some naked, some injured and burned, and about half with life jackets. One other lifeboat, bottom up, was seen.
- In a search continued throughout daylight over a large oval area roughly seven by fourteen miles, Mugford (photo) rescued 63 men and one woman: 29 ship's crew; 34 army medical personnel, including one nurse, Sister Savage; and one Torres Strait pilot.
- The survivors had been some 36 hours in the water, clinging to debris, before they were rescued.

Photo # 19-N-65301 USS Mugford off the Mare Island Navy Yard, 28 April 1944



15 May - Sea

- On board Mugford the rescued were given medical treatment, clothed, sparingly fed, and put to bed. "Sister Savage wished to aid in the treatment of other survivors, but was persuaded to desist and receive treatment herself."
- Sister Ellen Savage (photo) was the sole survivor of the 12 female nurses on board.
- Mugford berthed at Brisbane on 15th May and handed the rescued over to N.O.I.C's chief staff officer, Lieut-Commander McManus.
- "Mugford's ship's company," recorded Lieut-Commander Corey, "collected the sum of £239 plus which was given Lieut-Commander McManus, for the survivors' immediate needs, besides donations of requisite clothing, cigarettes, soap etc."
- Mugford's search of the area was thorough, and Corey said on arrival at Brisbane that he held out little hope of there being any other survivors.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

044428

SISTER ELLEN SAVAGE, AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE, BEING INTERVIEWED AT GREENSLOPES ARMY HOSPITAL ABOUT 7 OR 10 DAYS AFTER HER RESCUE FROM THE HOSPITAL SHIP CENTAUR.

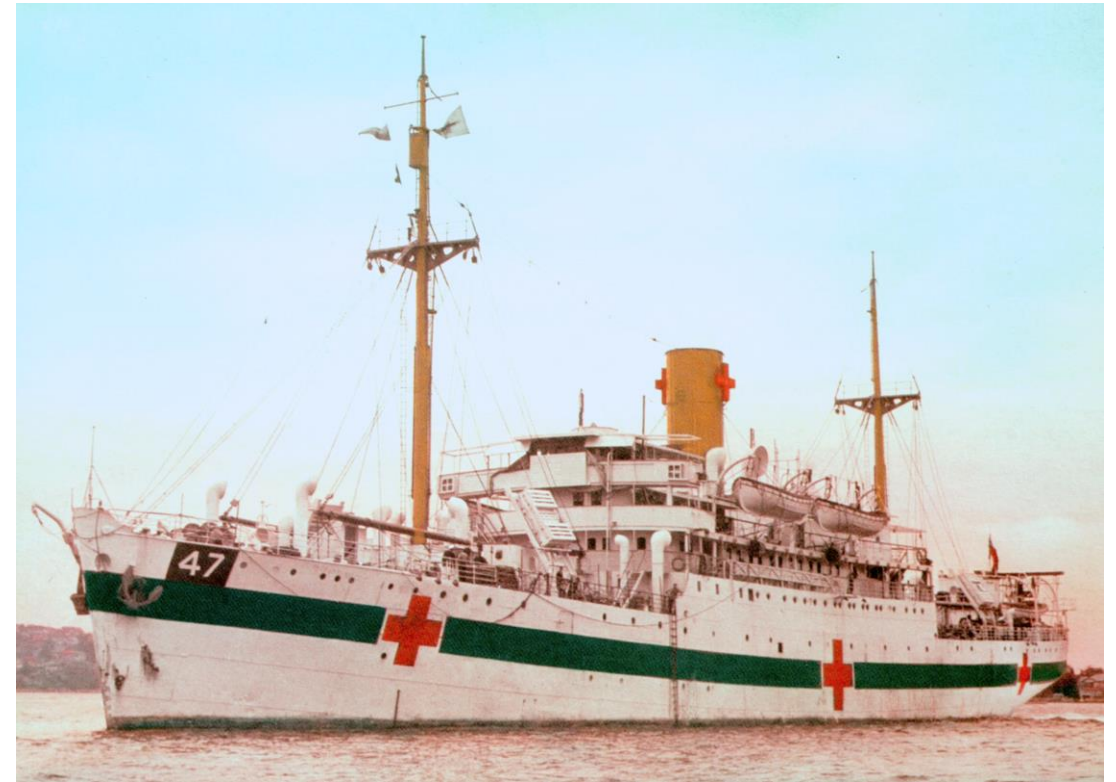
15 May - Sea

- Centaur, a motor passenger ship of 3,222 tons, owned by the Ocean Steamship Company Ltd, and registered at Liverpool, England, had formerly been in the West Australia-Singapore trade.
- In November 1941, the ship rescued German survivors of the engagement between Kormoran and HMAS Sydney. (photo Survivors from Kormoran under tow in two of Centaur's lifeboats. The German lifeboat can be seen behind them.)
- She was made available by the Ministry of War Transport for conversion to a hospital ship in January 1943, for use in the New Guinea area, and was taken over on the 9th of the month.



15 May - Sea

- She was allotted the Geneva Convention identification number 47, and this was painted on each bow during conversion.
- All the necessary formalities were completed, and on 23rd January the Foreign Office, London, was told that she would commission on 1st March, and was asked to pass particulars of the ship to enemy powers. This was done, and on 5th February the Protecting Power, Switzerland, passed the information to the Japanese Government.
- Centaur left Melbourne on her maiden voyage as a hospital ship on 12th March 1943. She arrived at Port Moresby on 13th April, and was back in Sydney on 8th May.



AHS Centaur.

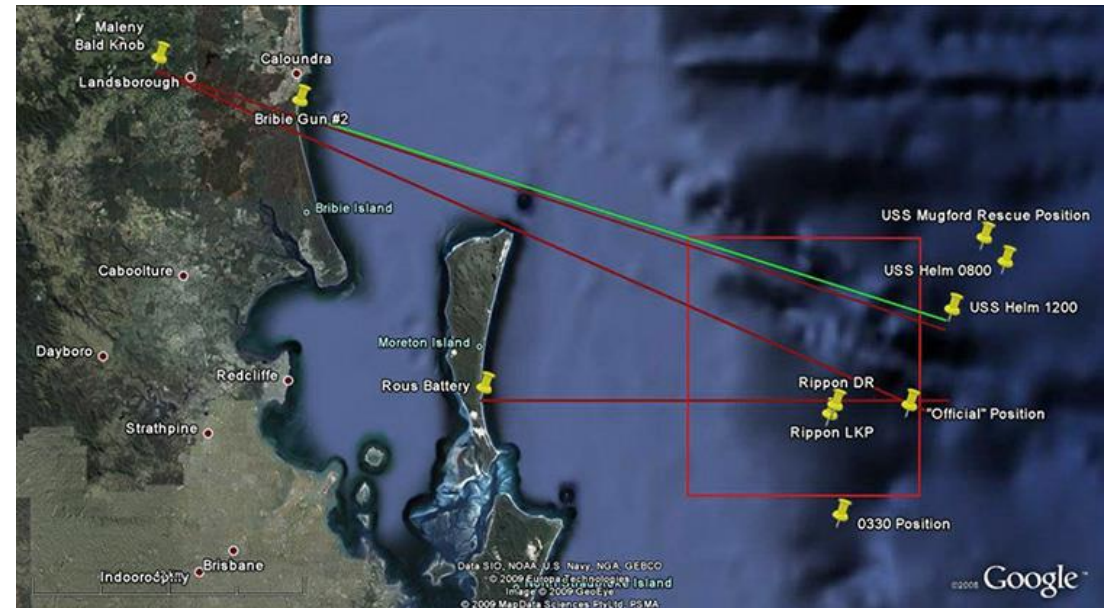
15 May - Sea

- Centaur left Sydney on her second voyage for New Guinea on 12th May, the 257 military personnel on board comprising 65 medical staff and the 2/12th Field Ambulance.
- At about 4 a.m. on Friday, 14th May, she was off Brisbane, with Point Lookout bearing W.S.W. distant 24 miles, when she was struck by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine.
- The weather was fine and clear, and visibility good. Centaur was brightly lit and properly marked in accordance with Article 5 of the Hague Convention for the Adaptation of the Principles of the Geneva Convention to Maritime Warfare.
- The torpedo struck well down in an oil fuel tank on the port side abaft No. 2 hatch, and the ship caught fire immediately, and sank within two or three minutes.
- Centaur made no signals, and there was no time to launch any boats, though two broke adrift from the ship when she went down. Most of those on board were asleep and had little chance of escape.



15 May - Sea

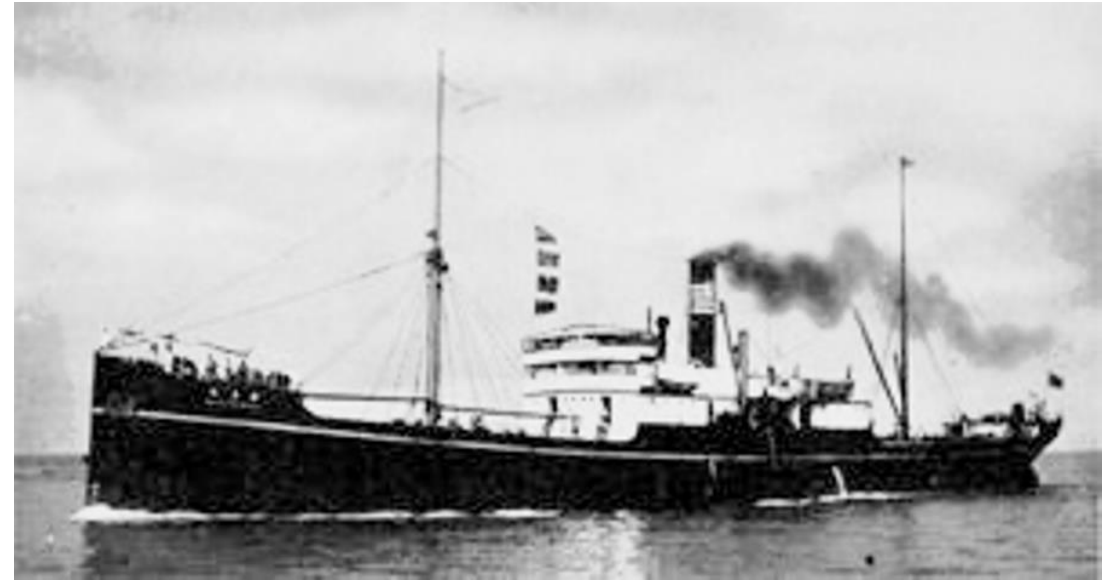
- No torpedo track was sighted, nor was any submarine seen at the time of the attack, but three of Centaur's crew, including the second officer, Mr R. G. Rippon, stated that they heard the motors of what they considered to be a surfaced submarine between midnight and 4 a.m. on 15th May. Two of them—Able Seaman Cecich and Seamen's Cook Martin—claimed that in addition to hearing the motors they sighted the submarine.
- The route which was allotted to Centaur before she left Sydney would, had she followed it, have taken her some 20 miles to seaward of this position. The senior surviving officer of the ship's company, Mr R. G. Rippon, the second officer, reported that the ship's master had considered that the route given to Centaur "was mainly for merchant ships, and that it would take him too far off-shore. The master therefore had decided to use a route of his own choosing .
- The survivors were for some 36 hours in the water, clinging to debris, before they were rescued.



The search area based on the navigator, Gordon Rippon's, calculations of where AHS Centaur went down. Information that he passed on to the Captain of the USS Mugford, after the survivors were rescued.

15 May - Sea

- The Japanese Army cargo ships, Indus Maru and Meikai Maru (3,197 tons), were torpedoed and sunk in the Sulu Sea south of Negros, Philippines (13°10'N 121°50'E) by USS Gar. Survivors were rescued by Matsuwa.
- Ormiston, proceeding under her own power at three to four knots, was subsequently escorted to Sydney, where they arrived on the 15th, by Ballarat, U.S.S. Henley, and H.M.A.S. Kybra.



IJA Transport MEIKAI MARU

15 May - Wau

- At 6.30 a.m. on the 15th the Independent Company, except for the platoon at Namling, withdrew to Meares' Camp.
- As anticipated, at 8.45 a.m. on 15th May, 20 Japanese dive bombers gave the Independent Company a grandstand view when they bombed and strafed the kunda bridge and Bobdubi village, causing neither damage nor casualties.
- An hour later 10 dive bombers and 20 fighters attacked the same area, and three dive bombers attacked Hote and killed three natives.
- At 3.30 p.m. to the great delight of the Australians 34 twin engined bombers and 30 Zero fighters attacked Japanese positions from the mouth of the Francisco to Kela.
- From 15th May the 17th Brigade concentrated more on aggressive patrolling in all sectors than on actual attacks.



15 May 43 - Aleutians

- The next morning, the 15th, success remained elusive until 1100 when the fog lifted in the northern sector, revealing that the enemy had withdrawn to **Moore Ridge** in the center of Holtz Valley, leaving behind food and ammunition.
- The pullback by the Japanese allowed the provisional battalion to break out and eventually link up with the two battalions near Hill X.
- As the men of North Landing Force then entered the valley in chase, the relatively clear sky allowed enemy troops on occupying Moore Ridge to place accurate fire upon them.
- Already slowed by that fire, the pursuit ended when a friendly air strike hit advancing American troops by mistake.
- That day Brown requested part of Buckner's 4th Infantry Regiment--and large quantities of engineer and road-building equipment.



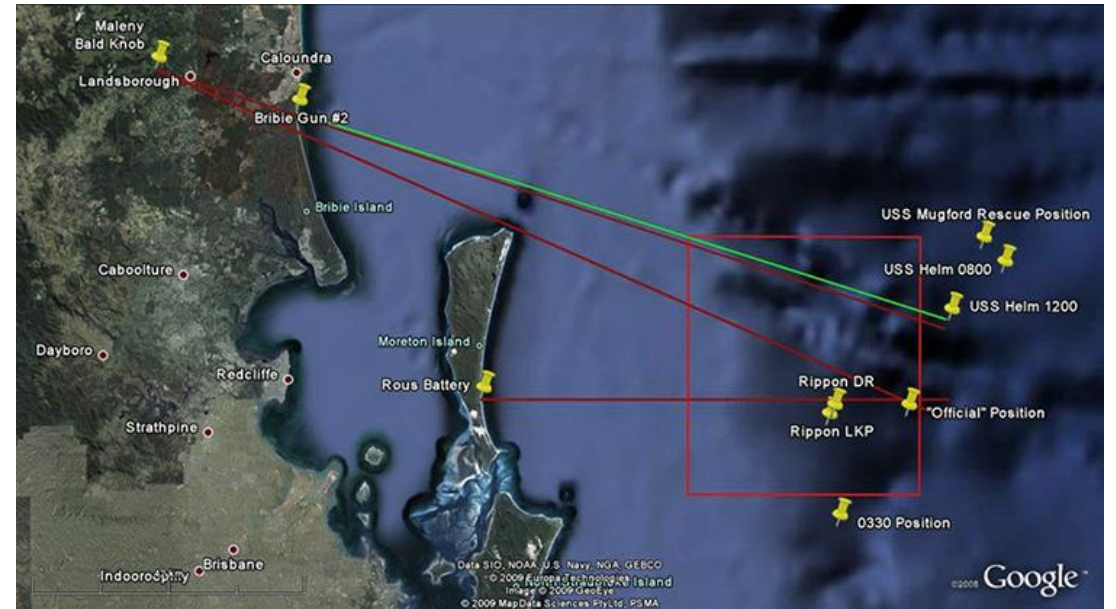
15 May 43 - Aleutians

- Back on Adak, the forward command post for Admiral Kinkaid and General DeWitt, the reported situation at Attu appeared grim.
- Of special concern to Kinkaid was the exposed position of the ships directly supporting Brown's forces ashore. A Japanese submarine had already attacked (unsuccessfully) one of Kinkaid's three battleships, and reports persisted that a Japanese fleet would soon arrive to challenge the landing.
- As a result, Brown was told that the Navy would withdraw its support ships on the 16th, or in any event no later than the 17th, leaving him with an unprotected beachhead and a major reduction in supporting fire.



16 May - Sea

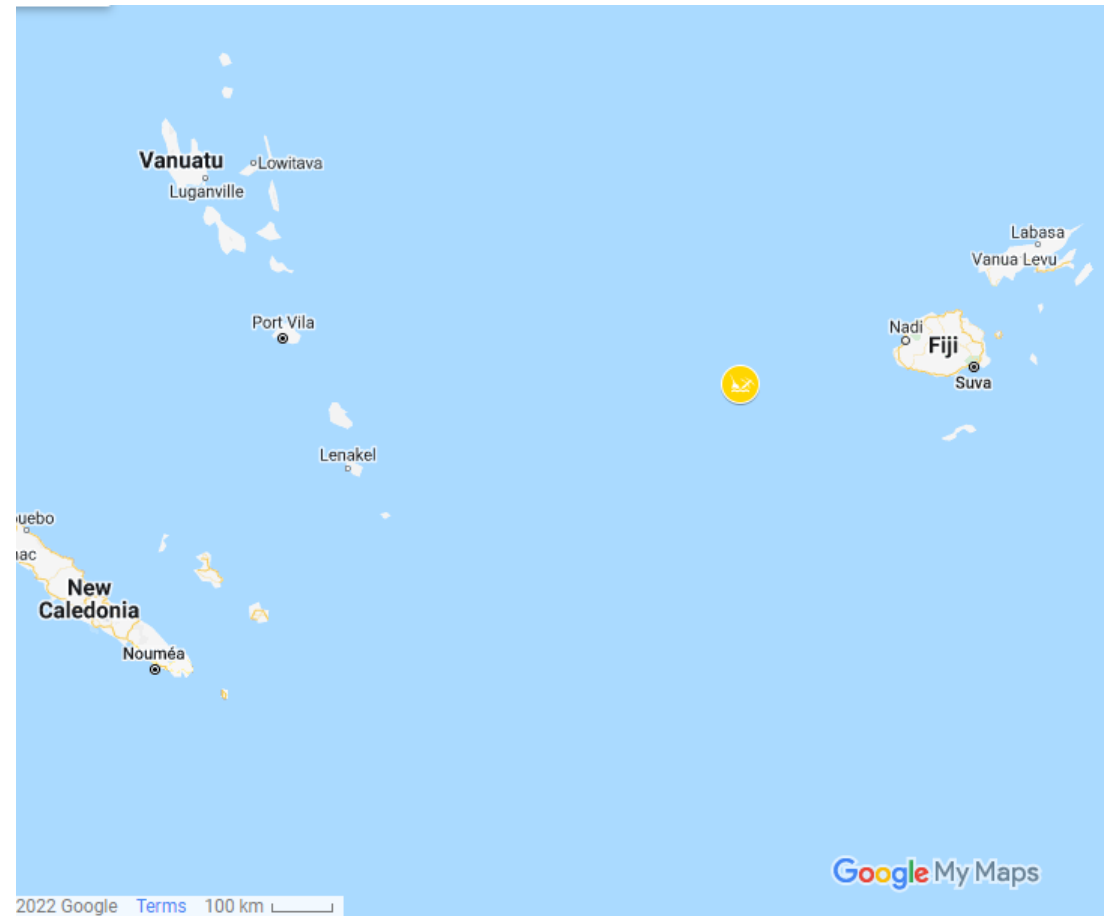
- A supplementary search of the area, carried out until 6 p.m. on the 16th by U.S.S. Helm, H.M.A.S. Lithgow, and four motor torpedo boats failed to find any more survivors.
- Those lost were 45 of the ship's crew, including the master, Captain G. A. Murray ; and 223 medical personnel, including 11 nurses.



The search area based on the navigator, Gordon Rippon's, calculations of where AHS Centaur went down. Information that he passed on to the Captain of the USS Mugford, after the survivors were rescued.

16 May - Sea

- The American Liberty ship, William K. Vanderbilt, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean off Suva, Fiji (18°41'S 175°07'E) by a Japanese submarine. The lifeboats were machine gunned by the submarine but only one crewman was killed in the sinking.



16 May - Brisbane

- On the 16th (May) Blamey and Herring had a long conference with a model of the Salamaua and Lae areas before them.
- Blamey explained his plan, which provided for two phases; first the capture of Lae and the Markham Valley and its airfields, second exploitation round the coast to Finschhafen and Madang.
- To capture Lae a seaborne landing would be necessary. This in turn, demanded the prior seizure of a shore base within 60 miles of Lae, this being the maximum range of the landing craft which would carry the troops by night to the assault.
- Nassau Bay was selected as the area most suited for the purpose since its capture would also enable a junction to be made with the forces at Mubo, reducing their supply problem.
- Herring summed up the matter when he wrote that Blamey "wanted the operation against Salamaua to serve as a cloak for our operations against Lae, and to act as a magnet drawing reinforcements from Lae to that area."



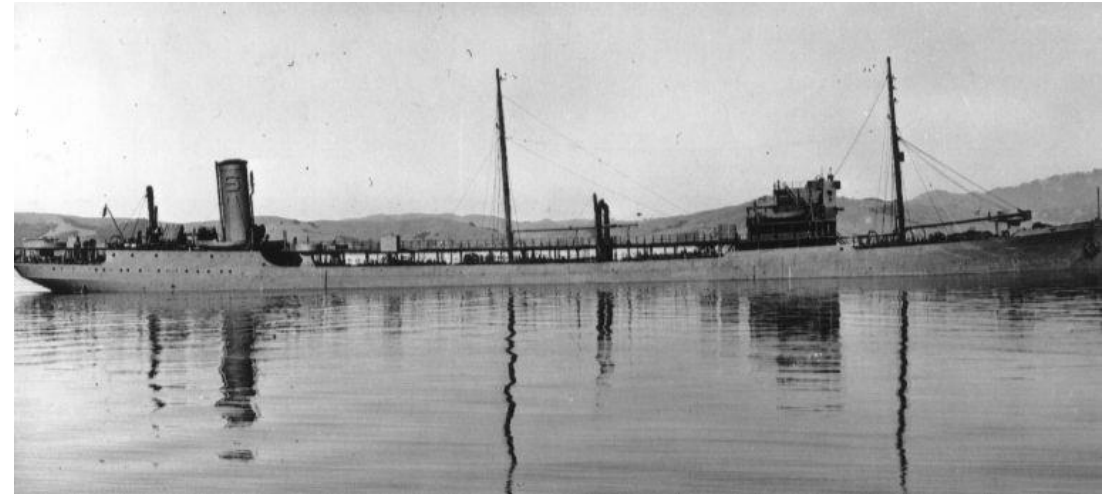
16 May 43 - Aleutians

- Brown's continued requests of reinforcements and the lack of any positive indications of a speedy breakthrough persuaded Kinkaid that Brown had bogged down. After consulting with DeWitt and Buckner Kinkaid replaced Brown and appointed Maj. Gen. Eugene M. Landrum to take command on the 16th.
- An advance by North Landing Force broke the deadlock on Attu the same day Landrum assumed command.
- A foothold on the northern end of Moore Ridge had been won in the center of Holtz Valley, thereby gaining control of the entire ridge.
- The Japanese, greatly outnumbered by the Americans and in danger of being taken from the rear, withdrew that night (16-17 May) toward Chichagof Harbor.



17 May - Sea

- The Daifuku Maru No. 1-class army transport, England Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean (00°45'S 148°30'E) by USS Grayback. Two hundred and thirty-two troops and thirteen crewmen were killed.
- The American oil tanker, H.M. Storey (10,800 tons 1921) en route South Pacific back to the USA, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific off Vanuatu in position 17°30'S 173°02'E, by a Japanese submarine. Two crewman killed, the survivors made it into the lifeboats and were rescued by USS Fletcher.
- H.M. Storey had previously been attacked off the coast of California by a Japanese sub which chased her on the surface for an hour on 22 December 1941 until a navy plane intervened and forced the sub down.



USS W.S. Rheem, sister ship of H. M. Storey.

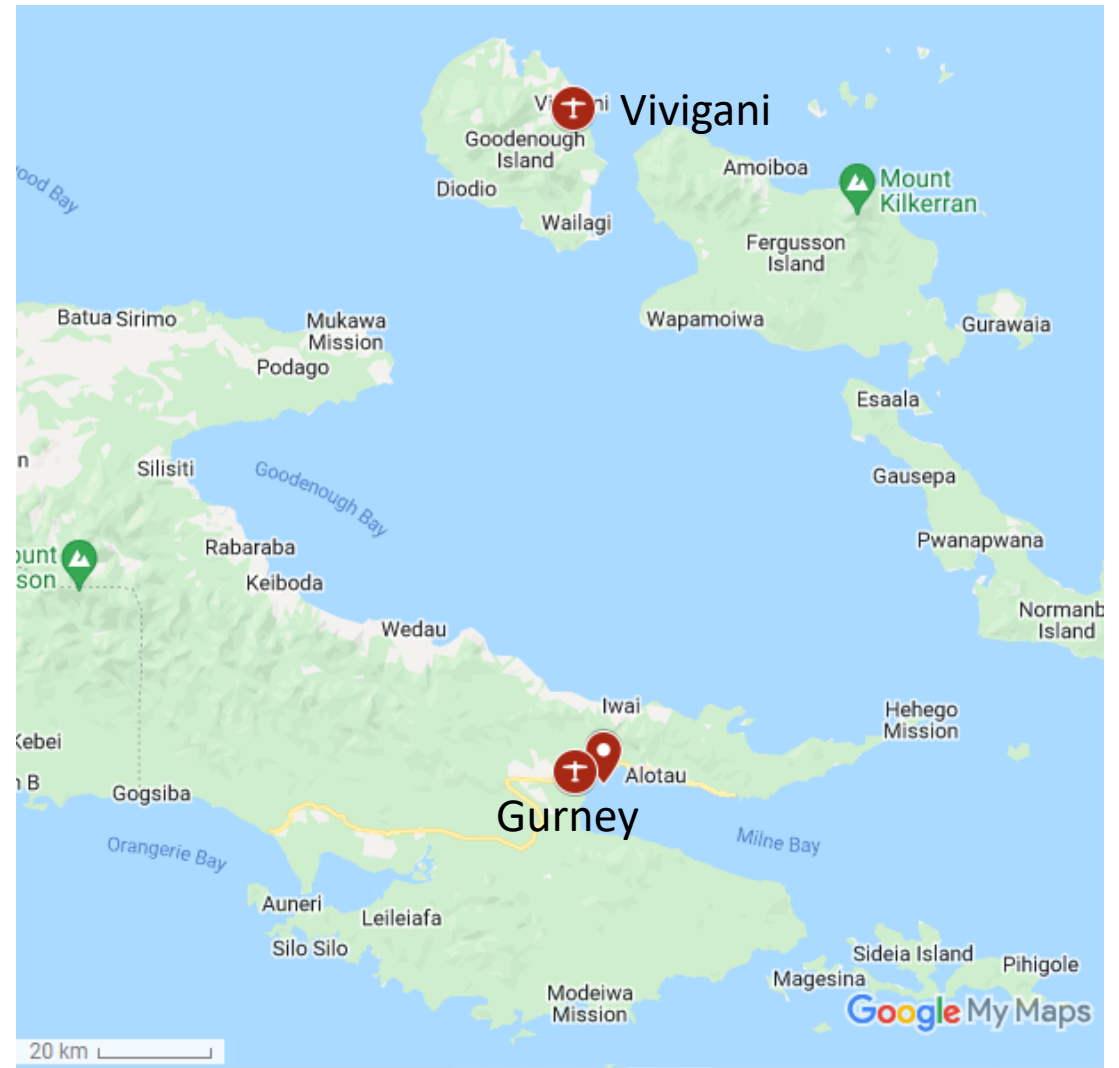
17 May 43 - Aleutians

- Well before dawn, troops controlled by the 32d Regiment in the northern sector moved forward and by daylight discovered that the enemy had gone.
- Patrols reported that the east arm of Holtz Bay was free of the enemy, allowing for much-needed resupply by sea.
- In the meantime, the 17th Regiment in the southern sector (at Massacre Valley) also found previously defended enemy positions abandoned, and it occupied Jarmin Pass.



17 May - Air

- On 17th May a large formation of bombers and fighters bombarded the Wau airfield where some casualties and damage were inflicted.
- On 17th May the Vivigani airfield, on Goodenough Island was used for the first time for a mission against the enemy, when six Beauforts of No. 100 Squadron, led by Flight Lieutenant Parsons, landed there from Gurney airfield (Milne Bay) in the afternoon and took off again at 11.15 p.m. for a night attack on the Gasmata airfields and supply dumps. The attack was successful.



18 May - Sea

- The cargo ship, Terushima Maru (3,110 tons), was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean by USS Pollack.
- Rabaul - Photos 0935/18 which are of poor quality but give good coverage of the harbour reveal –
 - 1 light cruiser
 - 1 destroyer
 - 1 possible old destroyer
 - 5 submarines (including 3 R0.100 class)
 - 2 minesweepers
 - 1 sub. chaser
 - 2 destroyer tenders
 - 1 submarine tender
 - 22 merchant vessels (including two tankers and totalling 99,300 tons)
- In addition one medium cargo vessel was observed leaving and a large merchant vessel entering the harbour.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

127616

RABAU, NEW BRITAIN. 1943-11-02. ALLIED BOMBING ATTACK ON ENEMY SHIPPING IN SIMPSON HARBOUR. A NEAR MISS AND A DIRECT HIT ON A CARGO STEAMER CAN BE SEEN IN THE FOREGROUND. THE SMALL SHIP IN THE BACKGROUND HAD BEEN SUNK DURING AN EARLIER ATTACK.

18 May 43 - Aleutians

- The north and south forces linked up on the 18th and set about the slow business taking the machine-gun and mortar nests left manned on the heights by the retreating Japanese.
- Eventually the combined American force, reinforced with a battalion of the 4th Infantry, drew a net around Chichagof Harbor.



18 May - Air

- On 18th May a large formation of bombers and fighters again bombarded the Wau airfield and inflicted some casualties and damage.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

055404

WAU, NEW GUINEA. 1943-08-08. DOUGLAS C47 DAKOTA AIRCRAFT LANDING ON THE AIRFIELD.

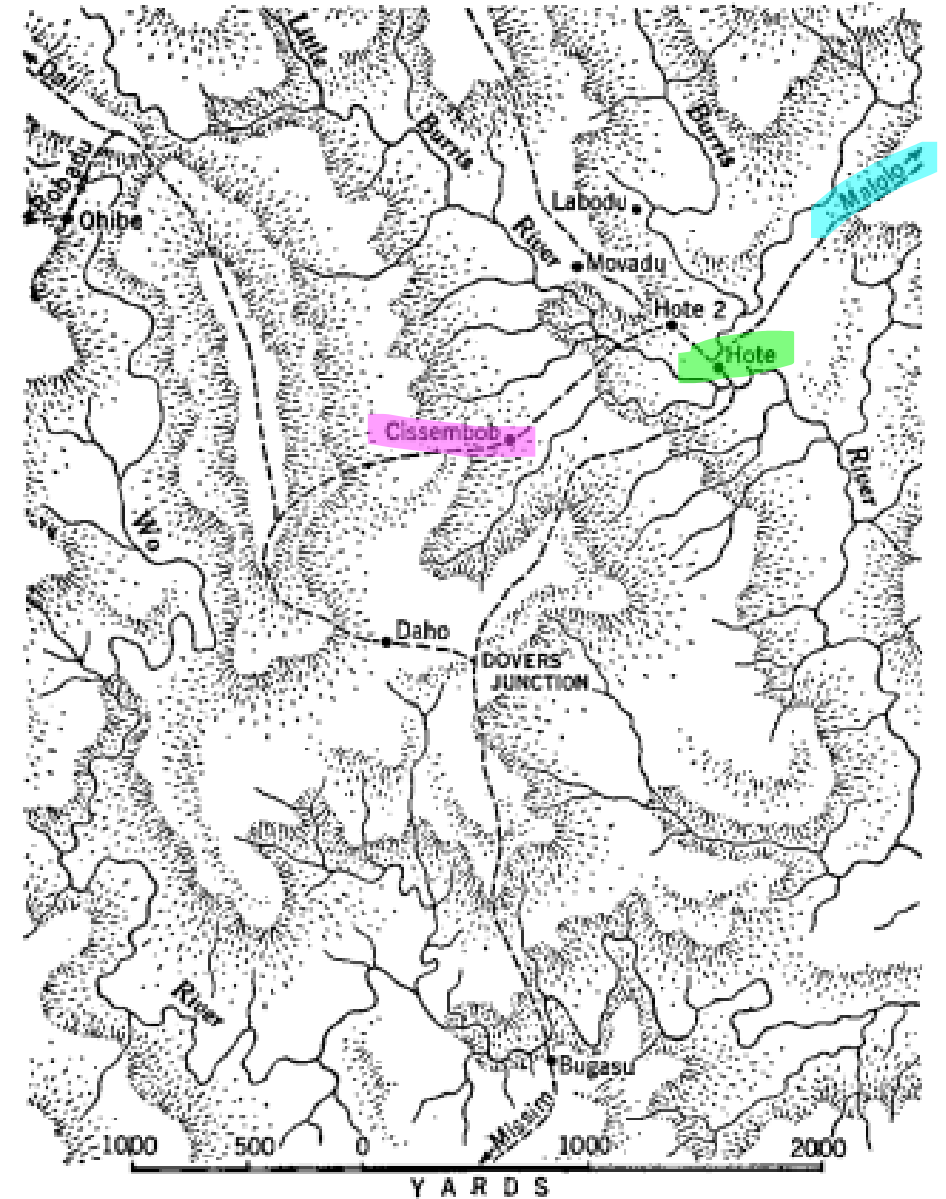
19 May - Sea

- Off Jaluit Atoll the next afternoon, Pollack torpedoed and sank 5,350-ton converted light cruiser BANGKOK MARU at (06°47'N 169°42'E).
- Four hundred and ninety-six troops and six crewmen were killed. Survivors were rescued by IJN Ikazuchi.
- Bangkok Maru had been carrying 1,200 Japanese troops intending to reinforce the garrison at Tarawa.
- Pollack received a depth charge attack and was lightly damaged.



19 May - Wau

- Early on the 19th a patrol was ambushed when moving up a steep kunai covered ridge about 500 yards beyond Hote along the track to Malolo.
- When the patrol returned about 10.30 a.m. and reported one man missing, Looker immediately led another patrol to the scene of the ambush where he found the missing man unscathed.
- Looker returned to Cissembob at 4.30 p.m. and soon afterwards counted 170 Japanese moving into Hote from the east.
- That night the Australians in Cissembob, keyed for their first action, spent an eerie, sleepless night.
- Fifty yards forward along the Hote Track Looker set a booby-trap consisting of a grenade in a jam tin attached to a string across the track.



19 May - Air

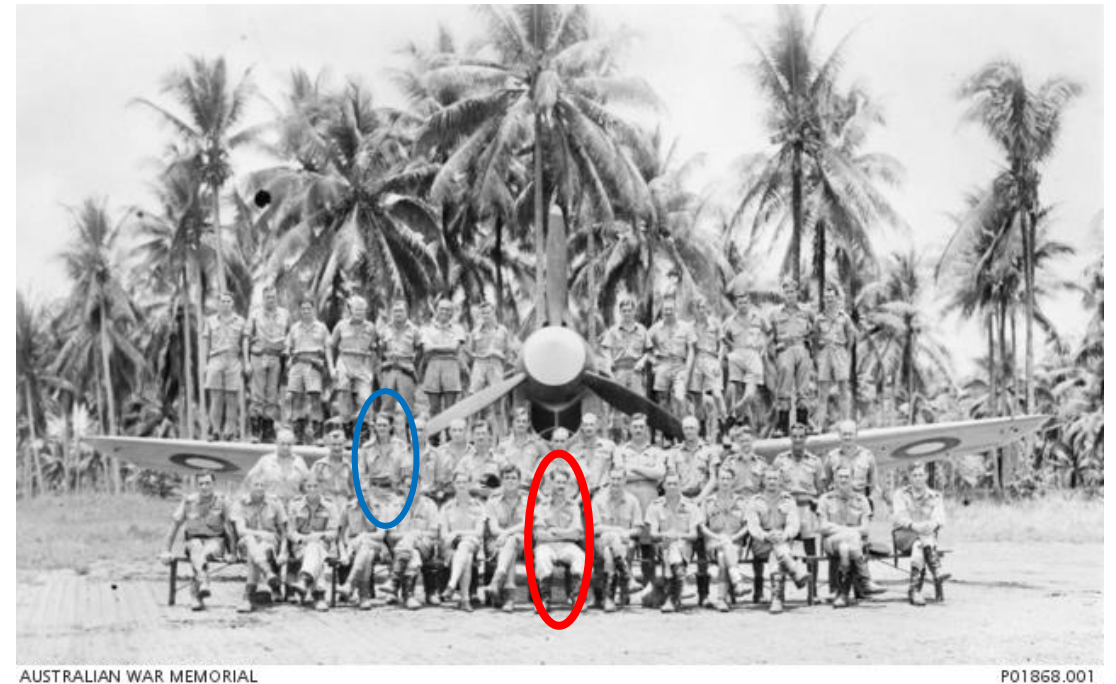
- On the 19th May Beaufighters and Liberators attacked the airfield at Penfui in Timor.
- Six Beaufighters led by **Flight Lieutenant Biven** arrived over it at sunrise.
- The Japanese, however, were thoroughly alert. Anti-aircraft weapons began firing heavily and enemy fighters, which were on patrol over the airfield at the time, attacked the Beaufighters immediately after they strafed and had destroyed two enemy bombers on the ground.
- Three of the six Beaufighters (piloted by Flying Officers Friths and Taylor and Sergeant Armstrong) were lost.
- Two of these are believed to have crashed into the hills south of Penfui and the third into the sea after being hit by anti-aircraft fire.
- Zekes followed the three remaining Beaufighters out to sea for 100 miles, but never got close enough for accurate shooting.
- Biven arrived at base with pieces of wood in his aircraft caused by crashing through a tree.



Coomalie Creek, NT. 20 January 1943. A group portrait of pilots and observers of No. 31 Squadron RAAF standing on and in front of a Squadron Bristol Beaufighter aircraft. Left to right: front (standing): Pilot Officer Cormie; 260740 Flight Lieutenant John Alfred Madden; Squadron Leader G. W. Savage; Sergeant Barnett; Squadron Leader E. Cook; Flight Lieutenant G. A. Greenwood; **Flight Lieutenant P. E. Beven**; Flying Officer J. D. Entwistle; Flying Officer D. Delaporte. In front Sergeant B. Agnew (holding a dog).

19 May - Air

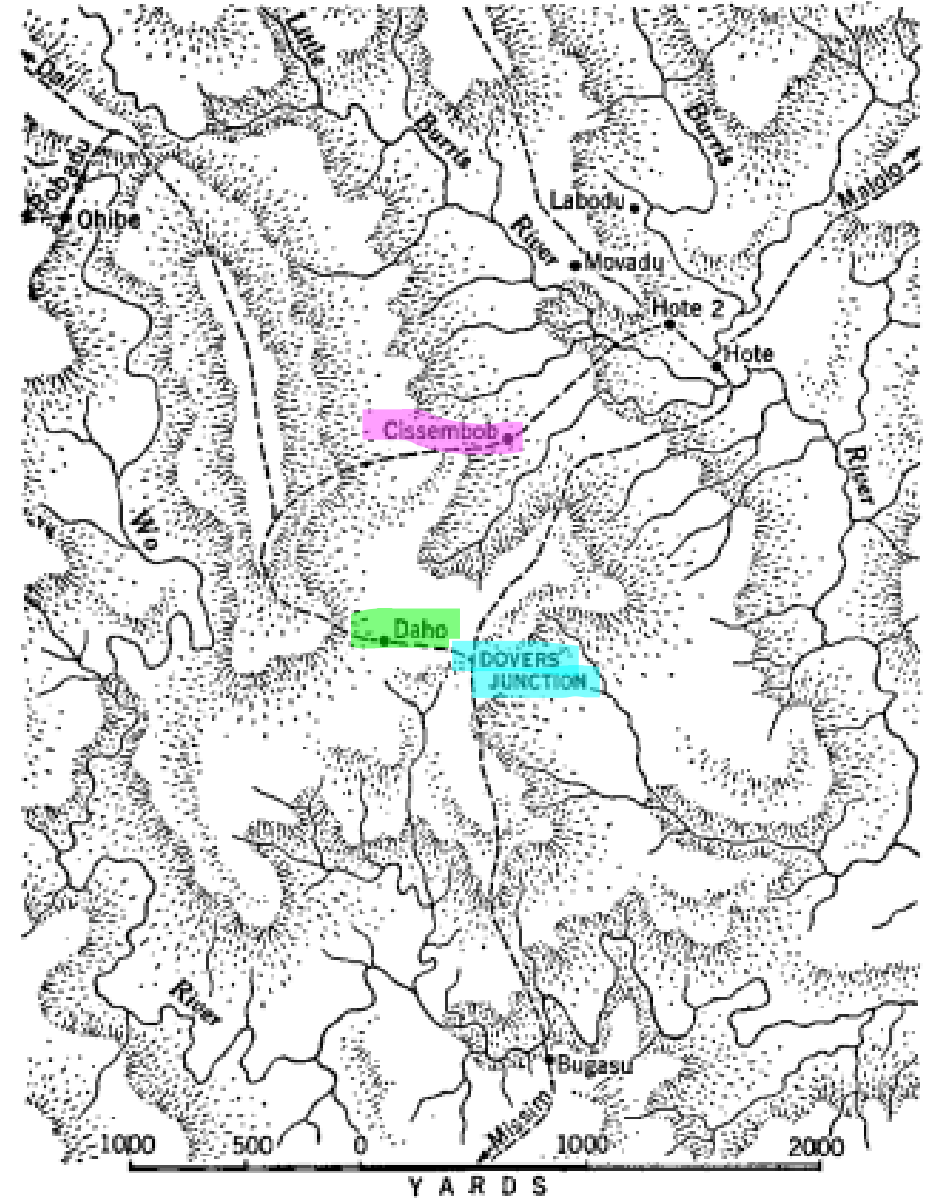
- The Liberators attacked Penfui some three hours after the Beaufighters from 14,000 feet and their bombs all struck in the target area.
- They too were attacked by fighters, three of which they claimed destroyed.
- The night attack on Gasmata via Vivigani was repeated two days later (19 June) when eight Beauforts led by Squadron Leader Smibert, again attacked Gasmata, dropping twelve tons of general purpose and incendiary bombs in the target area. One of the Beauforts (captained by Flying Officer Forrest) failed to return. The following day seven Beauforts with fighter cover provided by eight Kittyhawks of No. 77 Squadron, led by **Cresswell**, searched without success for the missing Beaufort.



Pilots and administrative staff of No. 77 Squadron RAAF around one of the squadron's Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk aircraft, at Gurney airstrip, Milne Bay. April 1943.

20 May - Wau

- At 3.30 a.m. on the 20th a runner arrived from Missim with orders from Warfe to send two men with a Bren to cover **Dovers' Junction**.
- Looker also sent three men to cover a track leading from **Daho** about 900 yards along the same ridge as Cissembob.
- To defend **Cissembob** against 170 Japanese he now had 24 men. The core of his defence was the experienced Vickers gun team which was guarding the main Hote Track. Looker and an Owen gunner were with the machine-gunners, and two depleted sections watched the flank.
- The booby-trap exploded at 5.30 a.m.
- About 10 minutes later, when light was dawning, Japanese could be seen creeping up the main track about 700 yards away.
- The Vickers gunners and riflemen opened up on them and swept them from the track, the Vickers knocking out three Japanese machine-guns. "Things were pretty lively for a while and we fired on all movement," reported the gunners after the action. It was not long before the Japanese pin - pointed the Vickers, and, after working out its arc of fire, they rapidly moved large forces with machine-guns to the right and left flanks while another force maintaining pressure on the track.
- The Vickers, however, and the riflemen who were in a position to shoot ,continued to inflict casualties.



20 May - Wau

- At 9 a.m. Looker was observing through a telescope, when an enemy machine-gun opened up from a distance of 25 yards and wounded two men. "We think he must have got through early in the piece," reported the other Vickers gunner.
- Looker immediately silenced the Japanese gun with a grenade.
- By 1 p.m. the Japanese were seen moving up a razor-back to the left and were occupying ground overlooking Cissembob. Threatened with encirclement, Looker heeded the general instructions to avoid being committed to heavy action if casualties were likely.
- He therefore ordered a withdrawal and instructed the gun crew to render the gun useless. The gunners removed the lock, slides and firing pin, and then withdrew with the men of the 24th Battalion.
- The gunners had fired over 6,000 rounds and were estimated by Looker to have killed at least 30, his own men killing another 20.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

127970

2/3RD AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENT COMPANY MOUNT A VICKERS MEDIUM MACHINE-GUN IN A GUN-PIT TYPICAL OF OTHERS IN THE AREA, COMMANDING ENEMY MOVEMENT ALONG THE RIDGE.

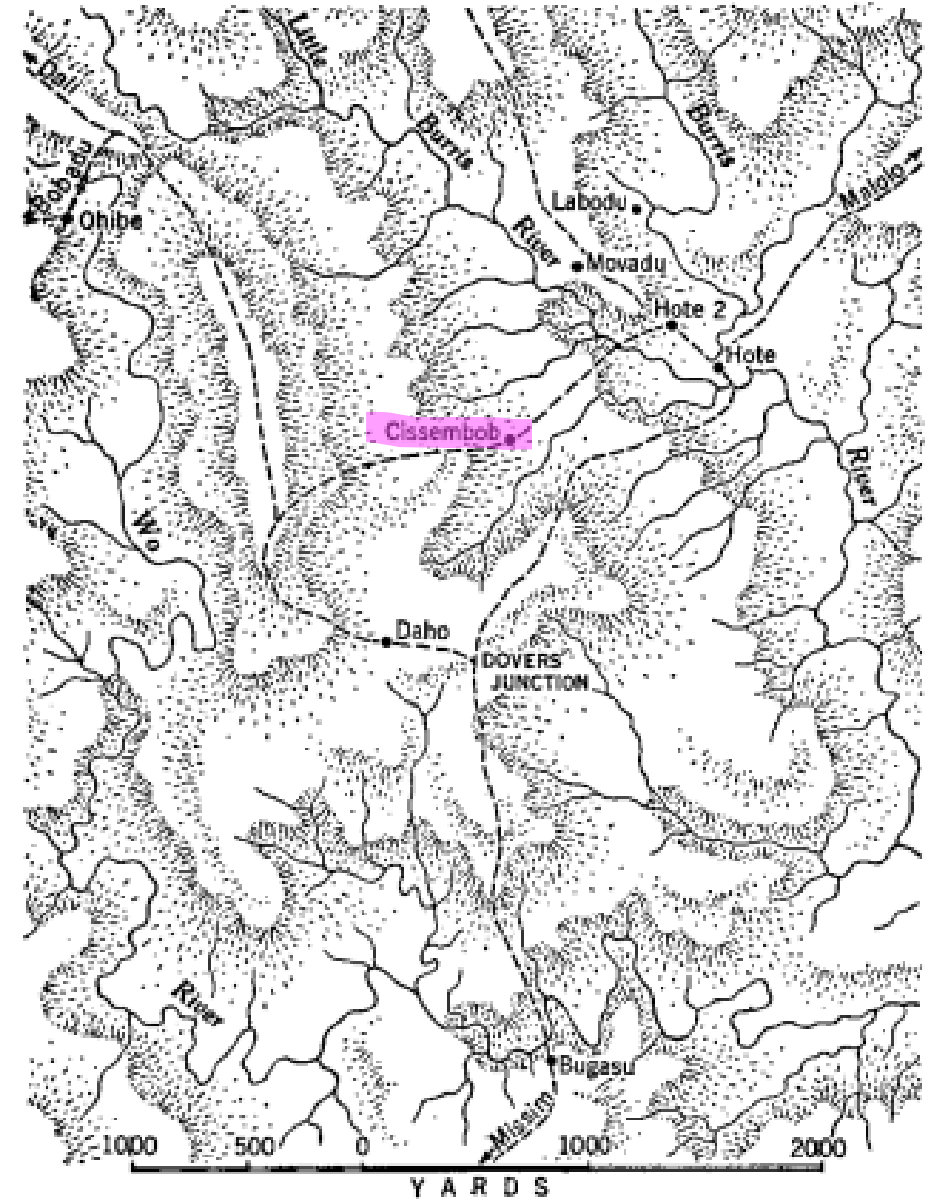
20 May - Air

- Kenney (Time cover 18 Jan 43) wrote to Bostock on 20th May:
- “Allied Air Force operations instructions have indicated the inauguration of offensive operations in the New Guinea theatre. These operations will continue and increase in scope during the balance of this year. Analysis of enemy intentions has shown an uncertainty in his mind as to just where the expected Allied counter offensive will begin and when.
- In order to assist the New Guinea offensive and to further increase confusion in the enemy's plans you will take the necessary measures to increase the show of force in Northwestern Area.
- The increase in bombardment strength in the Northwestern Area of both R.A.A.F. and Fifth Air Force units will be sufficient to permit periodic demonstrations likely to impress the enemy that large reinforcements have been made available in that area.
- His present ability to retaliate rests principally on the aerodromes at Koepang and Kendari. These bases, coupled with Ambon and Babo, represent the natural objectives we would have if an actual offensive were being launched from Darwin. It is desired therefore that you concentrate your strength against these four major bases with particular emphasis on Koepang. ...
- It is requested that you institute a plan for carrying out such a program during June and July, with maximum effort during the first part of July”.



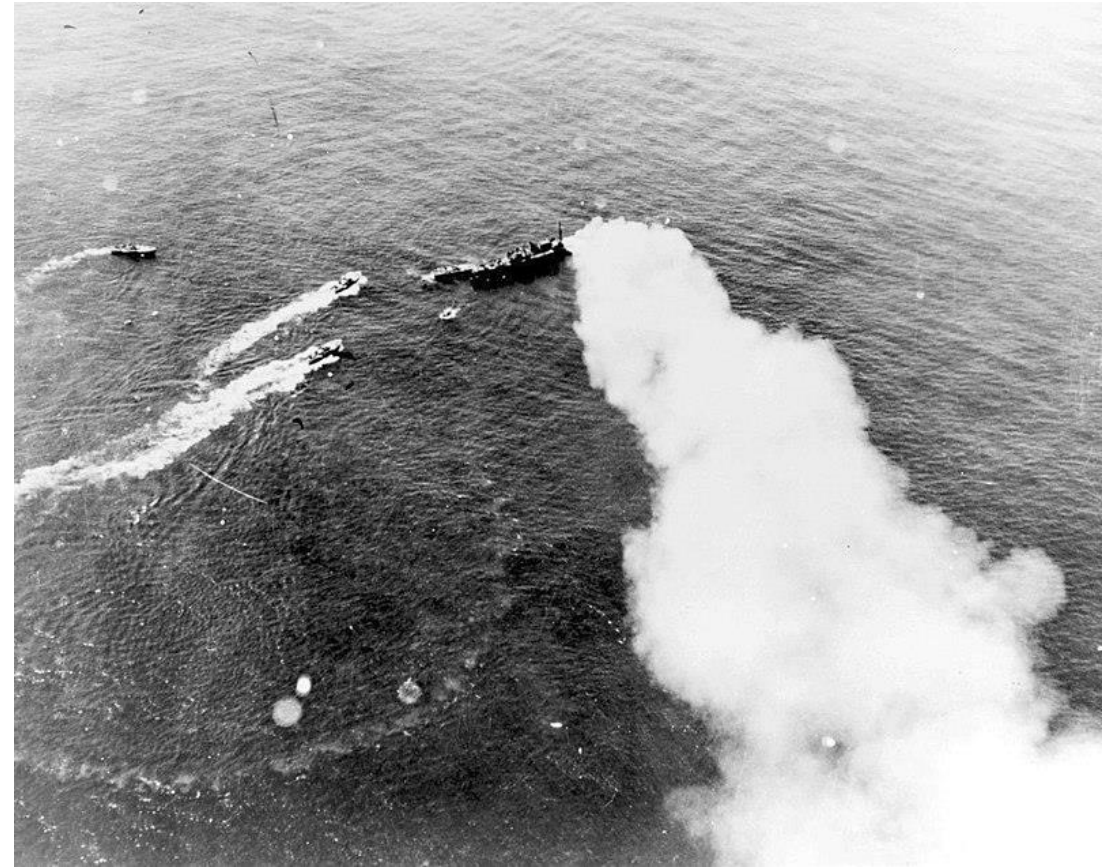
22 May - Wau

- Warfe sent Stephens with his section from Bobadu to take command in the area.
- Patrols from the combined force found Cissembob deserted on the 22nd.



23 May - Sea

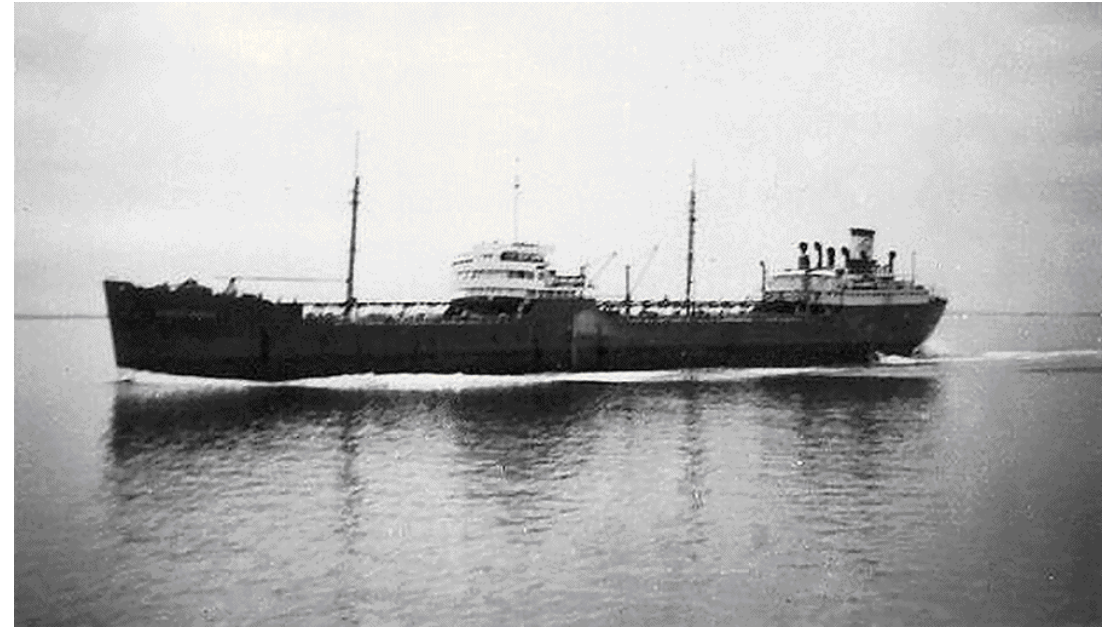
- The PT boat tender, USS Niagara, was bombed and damaged in the Pacific (11°00'S 163°00'E) east south east of San Cristobal Island by Japanese aircraft. All 136 crew were rescued by USS PT-146 and USS PT-147. She was scuttled by USS PT-147.
- Niagara was a 267 ft, 1,000 ton yacht purchased by the USN in 1940 from Mrs Hiram Edward Manville of New York City.



Niagara sinking on 23 May 1943.

23 May - Sea

- The US tanker, Stanvac Manila (10,169 tons) fully loaded and due Noumea 24/5 from USA, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean 100 nautical miles (190 km) south of Nouméa, New Caledonia (23°45'S 166°30'E) by a Japanese submarine. Eight crew, three gunners and one passenger were killed. Eighty-five men were rescued by USS Preble.
- Two PT boats, USS PT-165 and PT-173, being carried as deck cargo on the tanker were also lost. Four other PT Boats floated clear when the tanker sank and were recovered.



"Stanvac Manila" 10,138 tons.

23 May – New Guinea

- Herring took Blamey's written instruction for the Nassau Bay operation with him when he returned to Port Moresby on 22nd May.
- Next day (23rd) he resumed command of New Guinea Force and General Mackay returned to the command of the Second Army in Australia.
- At this time Herring was the only Australian in New Guinea who knew the plan.

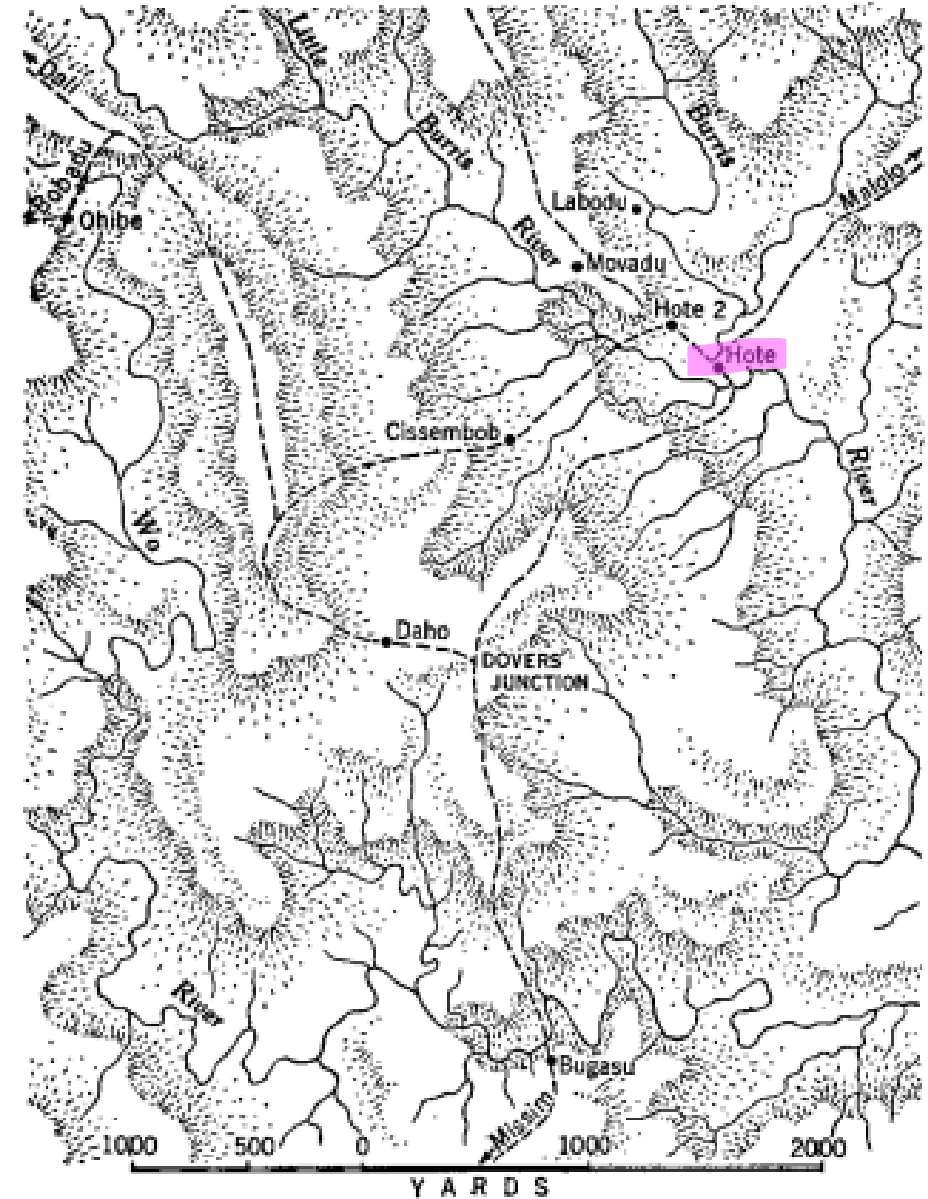


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART22563

23 May - Wau

- Patrols from the combined force moved on and found **Hote** deserted on the next day (23rd), when Looker promptly reoccupied it.
- Within five minutes of arriving there the Vickers was once again usable. Other stores which had been abandoned and were now recovered included seven days' rations, the wireless set and the telescope.



23 May - Wau

- On 23rd May Savige decided to rest the Independent Company in preparation for future raids against the track to Mubo, and in order to lull the enemy on Bobdubi into a false sense of security.
- At 7 p.m. that day Warfe received a message ordering him to reorganise and rest his force "with a view to more active operations in future".



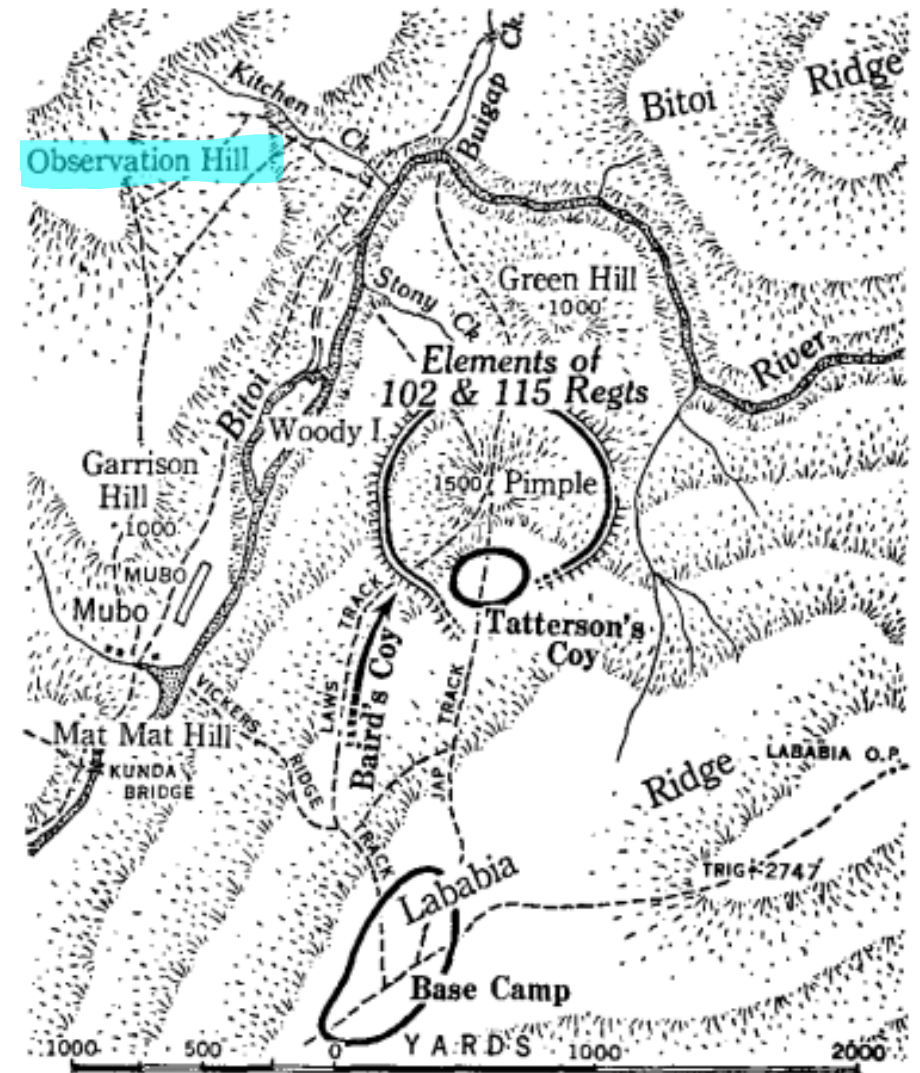
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

127989

MEN OF THE 2/3RD INDEPENDENT COMPANY WAIT FOR THE MIST TO CLEAR BEFORE MAKING A VISUAL RECONNAISSANCE. LEFT TO RIGHT:- MAJOR G. R. WARFE, LIEUTENANTS E. J. BARRY, J. E. LEWIN AND S. READ. July 1943.

23 May -Wau

- A patrol was led to the **Observation Hill** area by Corporal Ericson to cover Corporal Naismith on a booby-trap expedition.
- Naismith had a reputation as a booby-trap expert and was keenly interested in his gadgets.
- In the upper approaches to Kitchen Creek he found an enemy tent where he set five traps. Twenty-five more were set on all tracks leading into the area.
- At dawn the first of these was heard to explode and later a whole series of explosions was heard.
- One of Naismith's most valuable inventions was a booby-trap which would only explode when walked into from the enemy side. A man who tripped over the wire when moving out from the Australian lines would not set the trap off.



Encirclement of Tatterson's company, 2/7th Battalion, 9th-11th May

23 May - Air

- On 23rd May four Beaufighters of No. 30 Squadron, led by Flight Lieutenant Eddison, joined with five Bostons to attack Nassau Bay and the Duali area.
- The Bostons dropped bombs in and round villages while the Beaufighters fired 500 cannon and 20,000 machine-gun rounds into the villages on the bay.



MILNE BAY, PAPUA. C. 1942-10. A BEAUFIGHTER AIRCRAFT OF NO. 30 SQUADRON RAAF STARTING ITS TAKE-OFF RUN ON THE MUDDY GURNEY AIRSTRIP.

24 May - Air

- Rabaul - Lakunai, Vunakanau and Rapopo aerodromes and the seaplane base at Sulphur Creek were raided 0030-0200/24 by 6 fortresses and 5 Liberators.
- Fires were started in revetment and dispersal areas on all three aerodromes and aircraft were visible burning on Rapopo for 30 minutes.
- A single enemy night fighter was encountered.
- One Liberator crash-landed on return and all crew were killed: one Fortress force-landed in the sea but all members of crew are safe.
- Photos 1000/24 show 51 medium bombers and 15 fighters at Vunakanau plus 2 fighters and 2 bombers unserviceable.
- The reconnaissance aircraft observed a small cargo vessel at 1000/24 in Talili Bay course 270.
- A cargo ship, Shinko Maru, was sunk in an air attack at Rabaul, New Guinea.

24 May - Air

- On 24th May the Bostons carried out an early-morning raid on a wrecked ship on the beach near Lae, which, it was suspected, the Japanese were using to store supplies and unload submarines.
- Five aircraft, led by **Hampshire**, took part, and just before dawn broke the aircraft made a gliding approach on the target, passing over the wreck from bow to stern.
- The Bostons attacked in the face of heavy anti-aircraft fire and some of the bombs exploded on the wreck which caught fire.
- One of the Bostons, piloted by **Flying Officer Rowell** with Sergeant Taylor (gunner) and Sergeant Duncan (wireless operator) as his crew, did not see the target on the first run.
- Rowell decided to attack again alone and a searchlight from the ground illuminated his aircraft as he approached the target at 250 feet.
- Anti-aircraft weapons then opened fire heavily on him, killing Taylor, severely wounding Duncan and damaging the aircraft, but Rowell managed to fly it back to base.



Group portrait of members of No. 22 Squadron RAAF in front of a Boston A20G aircraft. C 1942.

25 May - Government

- Churchill and Roosevelt met again from 12 to 25 May, 1943 in Washington, code name Trident.
- Curtin had informed MacArthur that the meeting was to take place and asked him whether he would like to take the opportunity of putting the case for the South-West Pacific Area again. MacArthur considered that the Pacific theatre would not be discussed except in a minor way and that there was "not the slightest chance of changing the basic decisions which had made this a secondary area".
- In a speech to the United States Congress on 19th May Churchill gave an undertaking that Britain would wage war in the Pacific side by side with the United States in accordance with the best strategic employment of forces.
- The only mention of the war against Japan in the conference's conclusions was a general desire to do whatever was possible to support China's war effort.



Churchill and his chiefs of staff en route to the USA.

25 May - Government

- The decision of the Trident conference was to invade Sicily but the conference also approved an outline plan for the advance on Japan. This plan called on the commanders in the Pacific, Burma and China to accomplish the following aims in 1943-44:
 - 1. Augment supplies to China via Burma.
 - 2. Conduct air warfare in and from China.
 - 3. Eject the Japanese from the Aleutians.
 - 4. Seize the Marshall and Caroline Islands.
 - 5. Conquer the Solomons, the Bismarck Archipelago and the Japanese-held parts of New Guinea.
 - 6. Intensify activities against enemy lines of communication.
- The strategy was that Japanese forces must be worn down and subjected to continuous and increasing attacks so as to prevent them strengthening their hold, and that the Allied forces must obtain positions in readiness for full-scale attacks when these could be undertaken.
- The grand strategy of beating the enemy in Europe first, while holding the Japanese at bay in the Pacific, had been modified to some extent.



Roosevelt and Churchill fishing at Shangri-La, in between the Trident Conference discussions.

26 May - Sea

- The 2,300 ton cargo ship, Kagi Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the East China Sea south west of Kyushu by USS Saury.
- The cargo ship, Shoei Maru (3,580 tons) was torpedoed and sunk at Apra Harbor, Guam by USS Whale. The first torpedo hit with a blinding, orange flash midway between the stack and bow of the freighter. The explosion blew the ship's entire bow away, and she sank in four minutes with no survivors.
- A small freighter, Tainan Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean off the east coast of Honshu by USS Pogy.



27 May - Government

- Ward kept on repeating his “Brisbane Line” allegation with minor variations and by May 1943 his allegation had taken the form of a statement that a line—the “Brisbane Line”—had been drawn north of Brisbane and that the Menzies and Fadden Governments had the “defeatist plan” of withdrawing behind this line in the event of an invasion.
- After repeated protests to him by the Leader of the Opposition (Fadden), Curtin did write to Fadden on 27th May saying:
- "On Japan coming into the war the Commander in-Chief of the Home Forces submitted to the Minister for the Army proposals relating to the defence of Australia, the essence of which was concentration on the defence of the vital parts of Australia. This involved holding what is known as the Brisbane Line."
- Elsewhere in his letter, which was widely published in the metropolitan press of 28th May, Curtin mentioned that the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces had been appointed by the Menzies Government, and that his submission had been rejected by the Curtin Government which "took steps to defend the whole of the continent".



Eddie Ward Minister for Labour and National Service 1941 - 1943. Pre war Ward was a long time opponent of any form of defence spending

27 May

- The IJA cargo ship, Kochi Maru (2,910 tons), was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean by USS Finback.

27 May - Wau

- On the 27th (May) an operation instruction issued to the commanders of the 3rd Division, 41st American Division, Fifth Air Force, and American P.T. (Patrol Torpedo) Boats reached 3rd Division.
- The object of the pending operations was "to bring about offensive overland action against Salamaua from the Wau-Bulolo area and along the coast from Morobe, without jeopardising the defence of our bases in New Guinea".
- Savage's task was defined as ultimately to drive the enemy north of the Francisco River by aggressive action as soon as practicable; and immediately to establish a beach-head at Nassau Bay in order to open a sea line of communications into the Mubo area and enable American forces to operate in conjunction with the Australians.
- The task of Major General Fuller, commanding the 41st Division, would include ensuring the security of New Guinea east of the Owen Stanleys from Oro Bay to Morobe, moving a battalion group to secure the Lasanga Island - Baden Bay area three days before D-day as a base for operations northwards along the coast, and arranging for the landing of the battalion group at Nassau Bay whence it would cooperate in driving the Japanese north of the Francisco.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR, PHOTOGRAPHED BESIDE HIS PLANE IN NEW GUINEA. WITH HIM IS LIEUT. GENERAL HERRING.

27 May - Wau

- The Fifth Air Force would defend New Guinea bases against the enemy air force; carry troops and supplies and maintain them; prevent reinforcements or supplies reaching Salamaua by sea; reconnoitre and attack targets in the Lae-Salamaua-Sachen Bay area; and directly support the ground forces.
- The American P.T. group would attack enemy sea forces in the Huon Gulf in cooperation with the air force, protect the ground forces whilst seaborne and during movement along the coastal area from Oro Bay to Salamaua.
- All were warned to be ready by 15th June.
- It was plainly indicated that command of ground forces in the battle area would be exercised by Savige.

27 May - Wau

- Savige decided to restore the 2/6th Battalion to Moten's command to relieve the 2/7th.
- The staff estimated that the relief would take 10 days as the track could maintain only two companies travelling at one time.
- The forward move of the 2/6th began on 27th May, the day on which 15th Brigade headquarters and the first company of the 58th/59th Battalion arrived in Wau.
- The 24th Battalion—the first militia battalion to fight in the area—after a month was beginning to settle down. Hidden physical disabilities, particularly of the older men, had soon been found out by the mountains and swamps, and it had become necessary to change three company commanders because of their physical condition.
- Between the time Savige took command and the end of May his headquarters estimated that the Japanese had suffered 380 casualties—323 killed and 57 wounded. The 3rd Division in that period had lost 20 killed and 58 wounded.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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LEFT TO RIGHT:- MAJOR G. R. WARFE (O.C. 2/3RD AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENT COMPANY); BRIGADIER H. H. HAMMER (COMMANDING THE 15TH BRIGADE); LIEUTENANT COLONEL P. D. STARR (C.O. 58TH/59TH BATTALION); AND MAJOR B. H. TRAVERS, (HAMMER'S BRIGADE MAJOR). Hammer had commanded the 2/48th Battalion at Alamein.

28 May - Sea

- The IJN auxiliary oiler, Akatsuki Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean west of Kyushu (27°40'S 125°55'E) by USS Saury. 35 crewmen killed.
- The seaplane tender, Kamikawa Maru, was torpedoed and damaged in the Pacific Ocean 225 miles north north west of Kavieng, New Ireland (01°36'S 150°24'E) by USS Scamp. She was finished off by Scamp in the early hours of the next day. Thirty-nine crewmen and three Imperial Japanese Army civilian employees were killed.
- The cargo ship, Seiki Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean off the Aleutian Islands, Alaska, United States by USS S-41.

27 May - Air

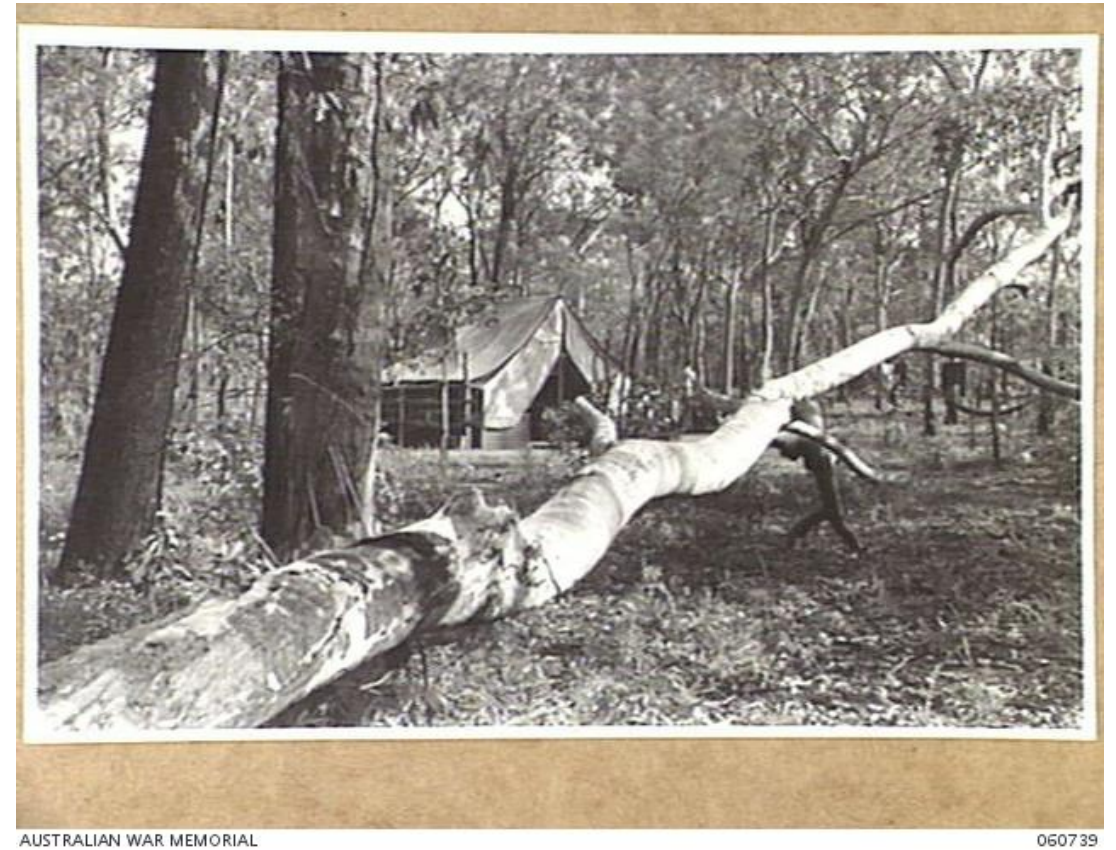
- Three days later 27th May the Beaufighters accompanied by American Mitchell and Liberator bombers attacked Lae Airfield and Jacobsen's Plantation where they were met by the Japanese with intense anti-aircraft fire from medium and light-calibre weapons.
 - **Eddison**'s aircraft was leading the Beaufighters across the airfield when it was hit and crashed in flames at the north-east end, killing Eddison and his navigator, **Sergeant Allott**.
 - The enemy anti-aircraft barrage on that day was the most intense experienced for some time.



Group portrait of pilots and navigators of No 3 Course (Beaufighters) No 5 Operational Training Unit RAAF (5OTU). Out of 23 on the course four were killed in action and one was killed in an accident.

28 May - Air

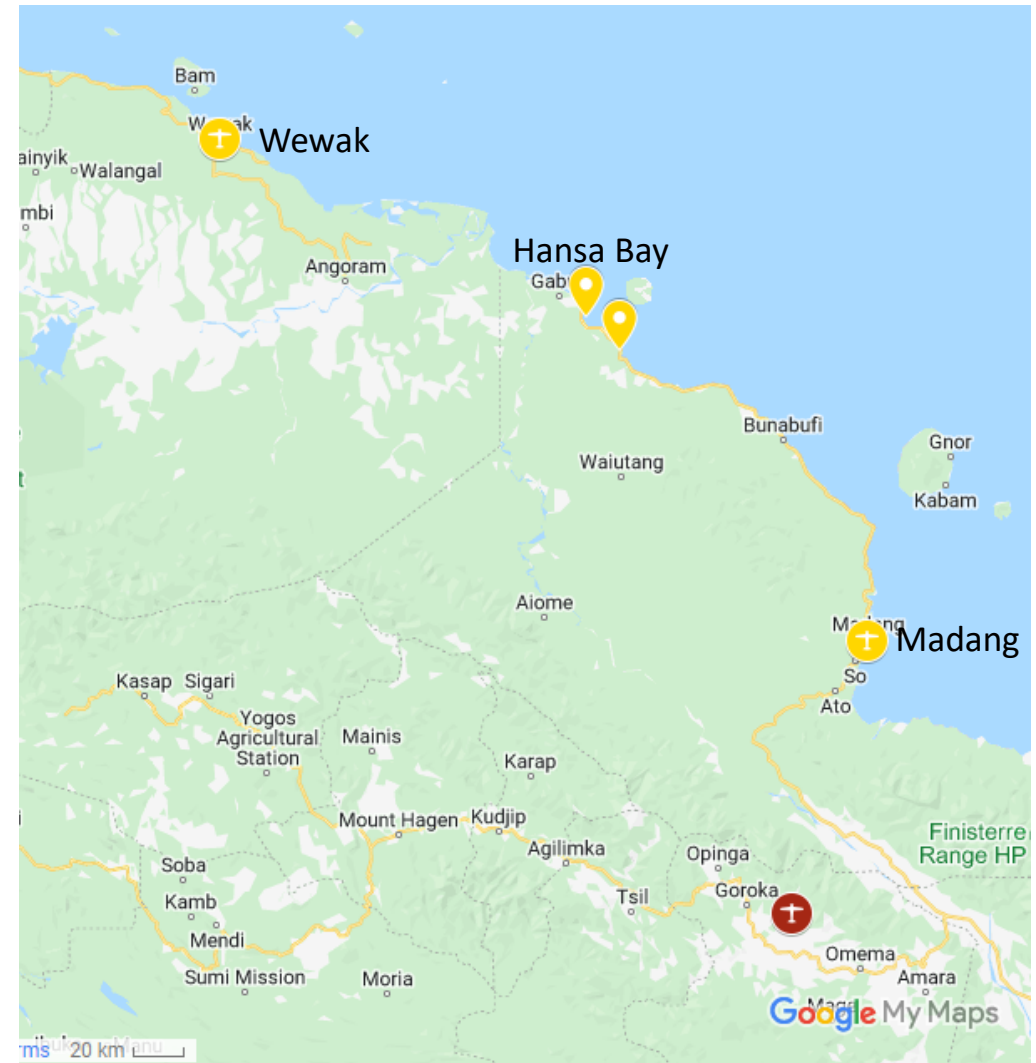
- On 28th May the Japanese made a third attack on Millingimbi airfield.
- Spitfires of No. 457 Squadron were on duty there and early warning of the attack was given, allowing six aircraft led by Flight Lieutenant Watson to gain height to meet the raiders.
- The Japanese force consisted of eight bombers escorted by five Zekes and they flew over the base at 20,000 feet.
- In spite of the interception by the Spitfires the enemy bombers made four runs over the target.
- The Spitfires destroyed three bombers, but two Spitfires with their pilots disappeared into the Arafura Sea and a third was damaged on landing.
- The Beauforts were ordered out on another strike against Gasmata on the 28th May but bad weather completely obscured the target.



MILLINGIMBI ISLAND, NT. 1943-11-20. CAMP SITE OF NO. 59 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT, RAAF.

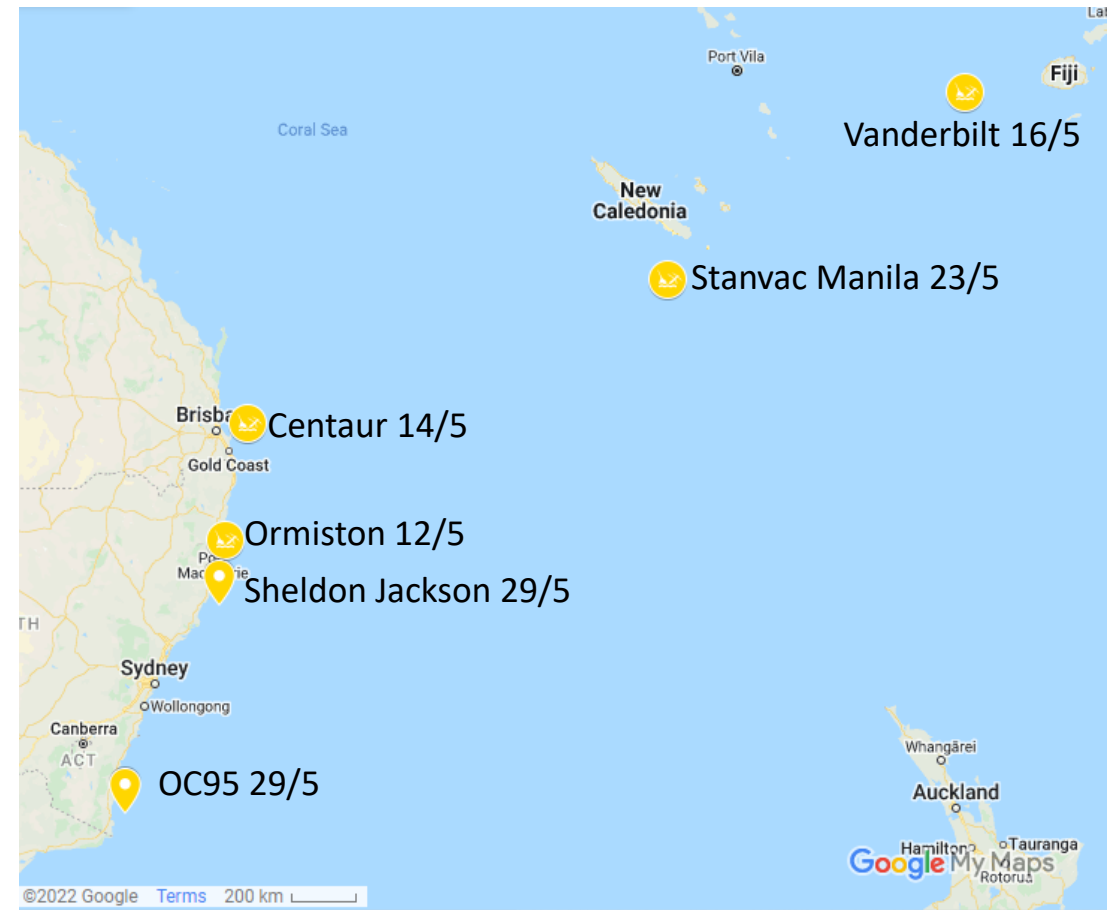
29 May - Sea

- Hansa Bay - A Liberator attacked a warship described as a light cruiser or destroyer off Manam Island (outside Hansa Bay) at 1810/29. Two near misses were scored and the vessel was left smoking.
- This aircraft reported sighting in addition to the above warship, 2 x 8,000 ton and 3 x 3-5,000 ton cargo ships. Three Destroyers were also reported as coming from Hansa Bay to join this convoy. This makes a total of nine vessels.
- Photographs of the convoy en route to Hansa Bay at 0900/28 revealed one destroyer, one gunboat and 4 x 5,000 ton merchant vessels.
- Photographs taken at 1035/29 revealed a coaster in the vicinity of Hansa Bay, and it is possible that more of this type of vessel were in the vicinity.



29 May - Sea

- The cargo ship, Eiski Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean, north of the Malay Barrier by USS Tambor.
- The ore carrier Shoko Maru, loaded with 7,250 tons of iron ore, was torpedoed and sunk in the East China Sea (29°50'N 129°35'E) by USS Saury. All aboard (57 crewmen and four watchmen) were killed.
- At 9.18 p.m. on the 29th Mildura, one of the four escorts of the 17-ship convoy "OC95 " from Melbourne to Newcastle, reported torpedo tracks when 35 miles N.N.E. of Cape Howe.
- At 10.48 p.m., the American Liberty ship Sheldon Jackson (7,176 tons) nearing the end of her voyage from the United States, had two torpedoes fired at her when about 150 miles N.E. by N. of Sydney. Both missed.
- D/f fixes have been obtained of enemy units in the areas of both attacks.



29 May - Wau

- On 29th May Savage (photo) issued his own orders in which his intention was "to destroy the enemy forces in the Mubo area and ultimately to drive the enemy north of the Francisco River".
- He considered that the enemy forces in the Mubo area must first be destroyed to open the line of communication from Nassau Bay to Mubo. The operation for the capture of Mubo would take place in three phases.
- First, on the night before D-day, an American battalion group would land at Nassau Bay.
- Secondly, the newly-arriving 15th Australian Brigade would capture Bobdubi Ridge on D-day while small forces raided the Malolo and Kela Hill areas, north-west of Salamaua, to distract the enemy's attention from the Bobdubi attack. After the capture of Bobdubi Ridge this brigade would advance south to Komiatum and prevent the escape of the enemy northwards from Mubo.
- Thirdly, a battalion of the 17th Brigade and the American battalion group would attack the Japanese forces in the Mubo area—preferably not later than six days after the Bobdubi attack—and, after the capture of Mubo, would advance north towards Komiatum and north-east towards Lokanu.

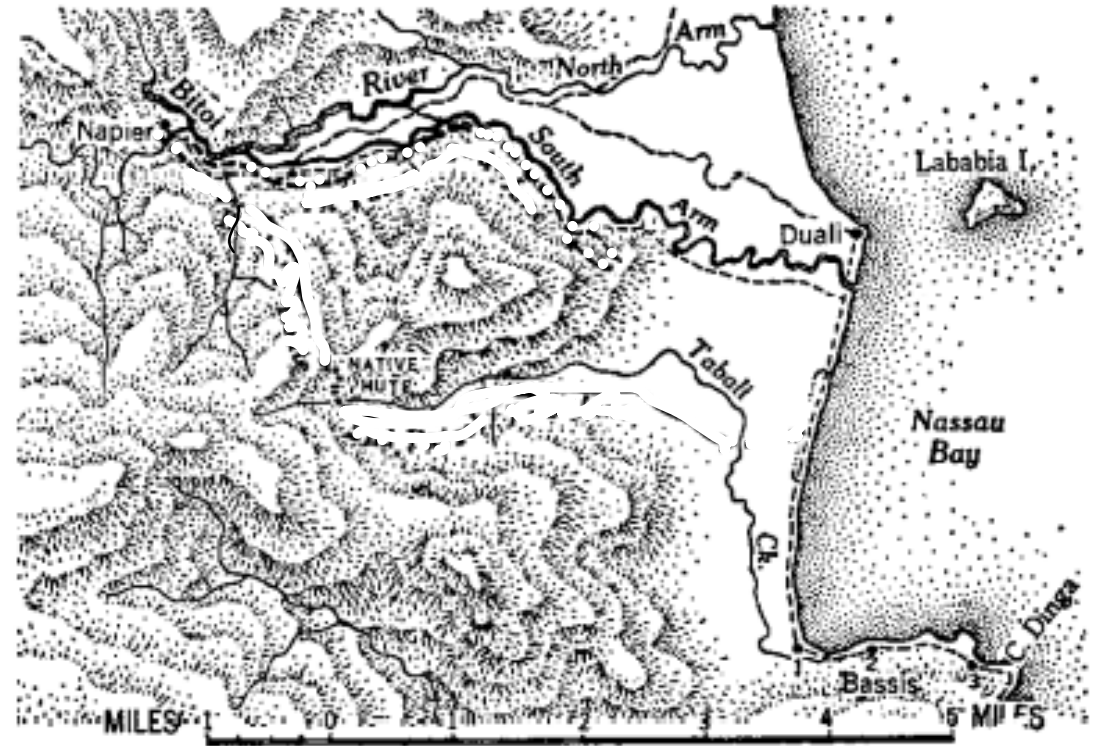


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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29 May - Wau

- The 24th Battalion would harass Markham Point and provide a strong fighting patrol to move to the mouth of the Buang River and establish an ambush position on the coastal track one day before D-day to prevent enemy movement along this track in either direction.
- The 17th Brigade was given the task of reconnoitring the shores of Nassau Bay to confirm whether any enemy defences existed and also to decide whether the beach was suitable for an unopposed landing. "It is essential," said Savage in his order, "that the movements of this recce party be not observed by the enemy."
- The 17th Brigade would also send a patrol along the south bank of the south arm of the Bitoi, and, three days before D-day, would establish a strong company patrol base as close as possible to the coast. On the day before D-day this patrol would create a diversion at Duali and on the night of the landing would provide a beach party to establish signal lights facing seawards. Moten was also ordered to detail a liaison officer to move with the American battalion group.
- After establishing a beach-head in the Nassau Bay area, the Americans would destroy enemy forces at Duali and Cape Dinga, and then move to Napier and come under Moten's operational command.



29 May 43 - Aleutians

- On the night of 29 May most of the surviving Japanese, about 100 to 1,000 strong, twice charged madly at the American lines, screaming, killing, and being killed.
- The Japanese survivors staggered back to the base of Engineer Hill. Several small groups made their way back to the caves of the high ground, where they were eventually cornered and eliminated by American search teams.
- Most simply clutched a hand grenade to their chest and scattered themselves across the tundra.



30 May - Sea

- The cargo ship, Hakoziaki Maru, struck a mine and sank off Shanghai, China.
- The cargo ship, Takamisan Maru (1,992-ton), was torpedoed and sunk off the mouth of Yangtze River (31-20N 122-39E) by USS Saury.
- Kendari - 3 B24s unsuccessfully attacked a 3,000 ton merchantman in the Harbour 0900/30.

30 May 43 - Aleutians

- As the fog lifted, the morning sun revealed a grisly sight. Over 500 Japanese bodies lay horribly mutilated at the foot of Engineer Hill. Several hundred more bodies, American and Japanese alike, were littered across the crest and down the long slope of the ridge.
- That day the Japanese announced the loss of Attu, as American units cleared out surviving enemy pockets.
- Although mopping-up operations continued for several days, organized resistance ended with the wild charge of 29 May, and Attu was once more in American hands.
- The Americans reported finding 2,351 enemy dead on the island; a few hundred more were presumed to have been buried in the hills by the Japanese.
- Only 28 Japanese surrendered.
- Out of a U.S. force that totalled more than 15,000 men, 549 had been killed, 1,148 wounded, and about 2,100 men taken out of action by disease and nonbattle injuries.
- Trench foot was the most common affliction. Most of the nonbattle casualties were exposure cases, victims of the weather and inadequate clothing.



Japanese dead at the base of Engineer Hill

31 May - Australia

- By May 1943 the Volunteer Air Observer Corps (VAOC) had a membership of 38,000 manning 2,639 observation posts from Cairns to Ceduna and from Albany to Geraldton.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Two members of the (VAOC), who like hundreds of other volunteers, maintain this duty continuously, fitting it in with their everyday work.

- Thanks for your attention.