

# War in the Pacific

## Defending Australia

### Campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomons

24 November 1942

The assault on the Japanese beachheads makes no progress and incurs heavy casualties.



# 24 November - Government

- Churchill, on 24<sup>th</sup> November, also made a last appeal to Australia, to retain the 9<sup>th</sup> Division in North Africa, referring to the probability of large-scale action in the eastern Mediterranean in the early spring and more particularly to the great shipping difficulties.

Churchill at HQ 9 Div AIF in August 42 with Generals Morshead and Auchinleck.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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# 24 November - Government

- "So far as we are concerned we shall of course not oppose your wishes," said Churchill, "although we greatly regret the departure from the Middle East theatre of a division which has rendered distinguished service."
- The object should be to bring the greatest number of the United Nations divisions into contact with the enemy, and certainly it would appear more helpful to the common cause if fresh troops were moved from the United States into the Pacific and into action against Japan than that troops already engaged with the enemy in another part of the world should be withdrawn."
- The information from Bruce was that Churchill, though opposed to the withdrawal, would have reluctantly acquiesced in it but had been moved to raise the issue again because Roosevelt was so perturbed.

## 24 November - Sea

- On 24th November Allied Land Forces Headquarters approved the relief of the 2/2nd Independent Company, and the withdrawal from Timor at the same time of some 150 Portuguese who wished to go to Australia.
- Pope, NOIC Darwin, planned the operation, using Kuru, Castlemaine, and Armidale.
- The proposal was for the three ships each to make two trips—to run into Betano on the night 30th November-1st December, land the 50 fresh Dutch troops and lift the 190 to be withdrawn, together with the 150 Portuguese,
- and return on the night 4th-5th December for the 2/2nd Independent Company.



- 24 November, was quiet. Colonel Miller's troops relieved Colonel McCoy's in the front lines, but no advance was attempted.

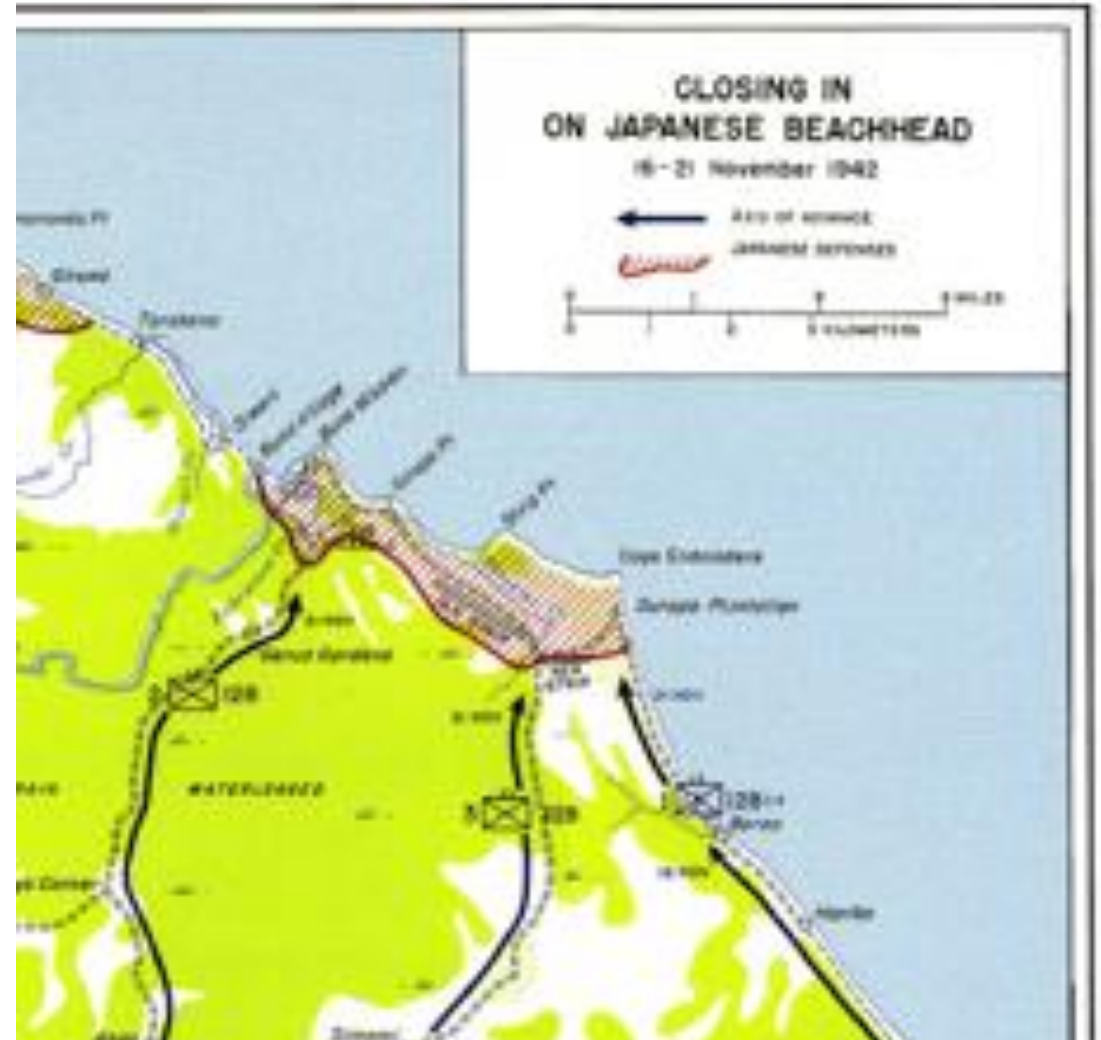


# 24 November – Buna W

- At 8 a.m. on the 24th attacking aircraft swept over the Urbana positions but they consisted merely of twelve fighters which not only missed their target area but were not followed by bombers. Smith held his hand and asked for a second attempt. It was arranged that this would be made again by twelve fighters as no bombers were available, but only four fighters kept the appointment. These left the Japanese untouched but strafed Smith's own headquarters.
- His men finally crossed their start-lines at about 2.30 p.m. supported, within a few minutes, by Manning's guns.
- On the right Company "G" moved off as planned with Company "E" in a supporting position in the kunai. But the former ran into opposition about 200 yards from their start-line and were held on the slopes of a second strip of kunai. Soon the Japanese seemed to be concentrating a good deal of fire on Company "E". Although that company lost only one man killed and five wounded, they became perturbed. Their own weapons seemed to be failing them through the effects of mud and water. Thereupon they fell back into the swamp and later, leaving some of their weapons behind them, stumbled to the rear.
- In the frontal attack. Company "F" of the 126th, strengthened by Company "H" of the 128th, found barbed wire defences barring their way along the track. These, covered by heavy fire, effectively halted them both.
- On the left Company "E" of the 126th circled for some distance on Entrance Creek aiming for the bridge on the track to Buna village. But accurate and heavy fire prevented their close approach to this. They dug holes and lay in them with swamp water seeping over them.

# 24 November – Buna W

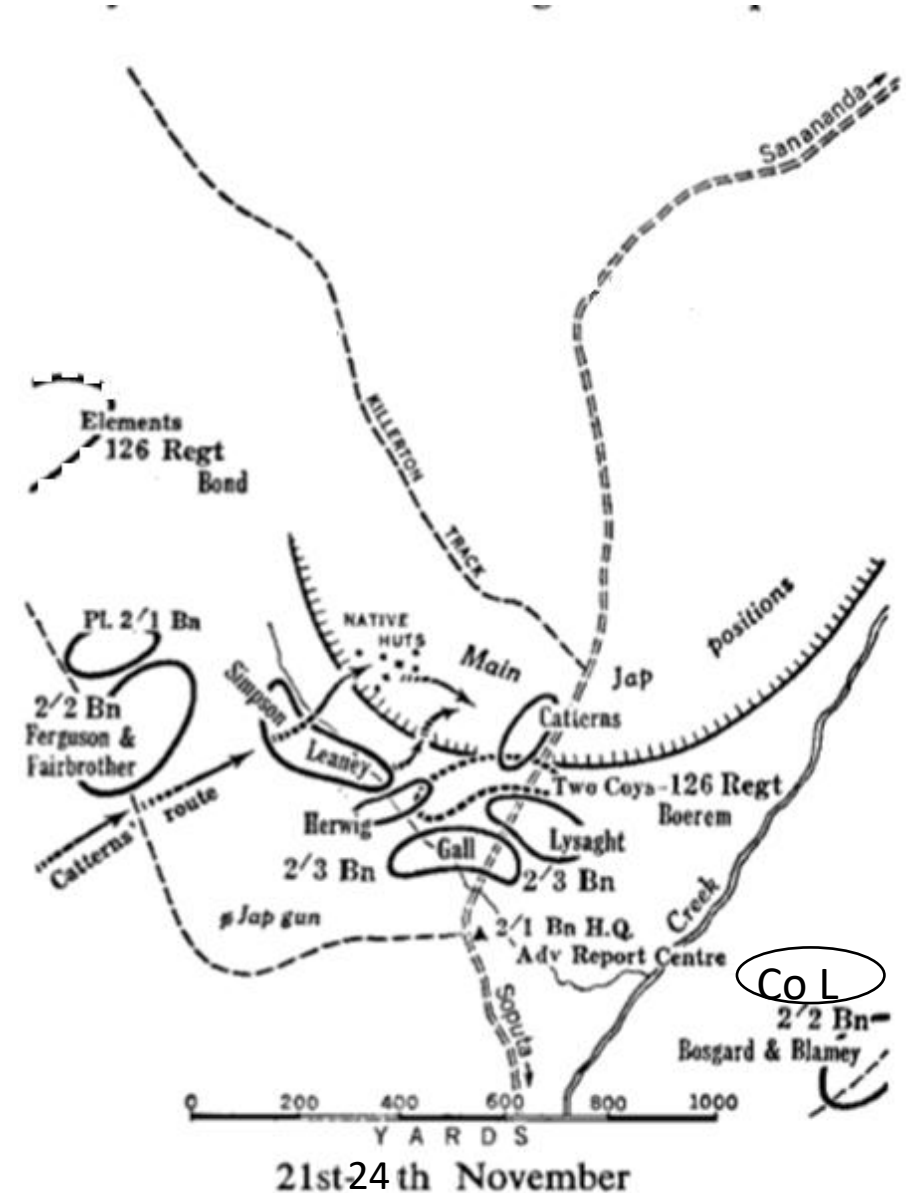
- Mortified by this whole failure, and the nature of it, General Harding was not disposed to listen to Colonel Smith's explanations. He was particularly incensed at the failure on the right wing.
- Smith had told him that he had ordered these companies to remain on the edge of the swamp until morning—and then Harding learned that they had straggled back to the rear.
- Smith said they were hungry and exhausted and incapable of further effort for the moment; that he was still of the opinion that no attack round the right could succeed.
- For those reasons he did not order the men back to their posts. He wanted to concentrate on the left and confine his activity on the right to patrols.





# 24th Nov – Sanananda

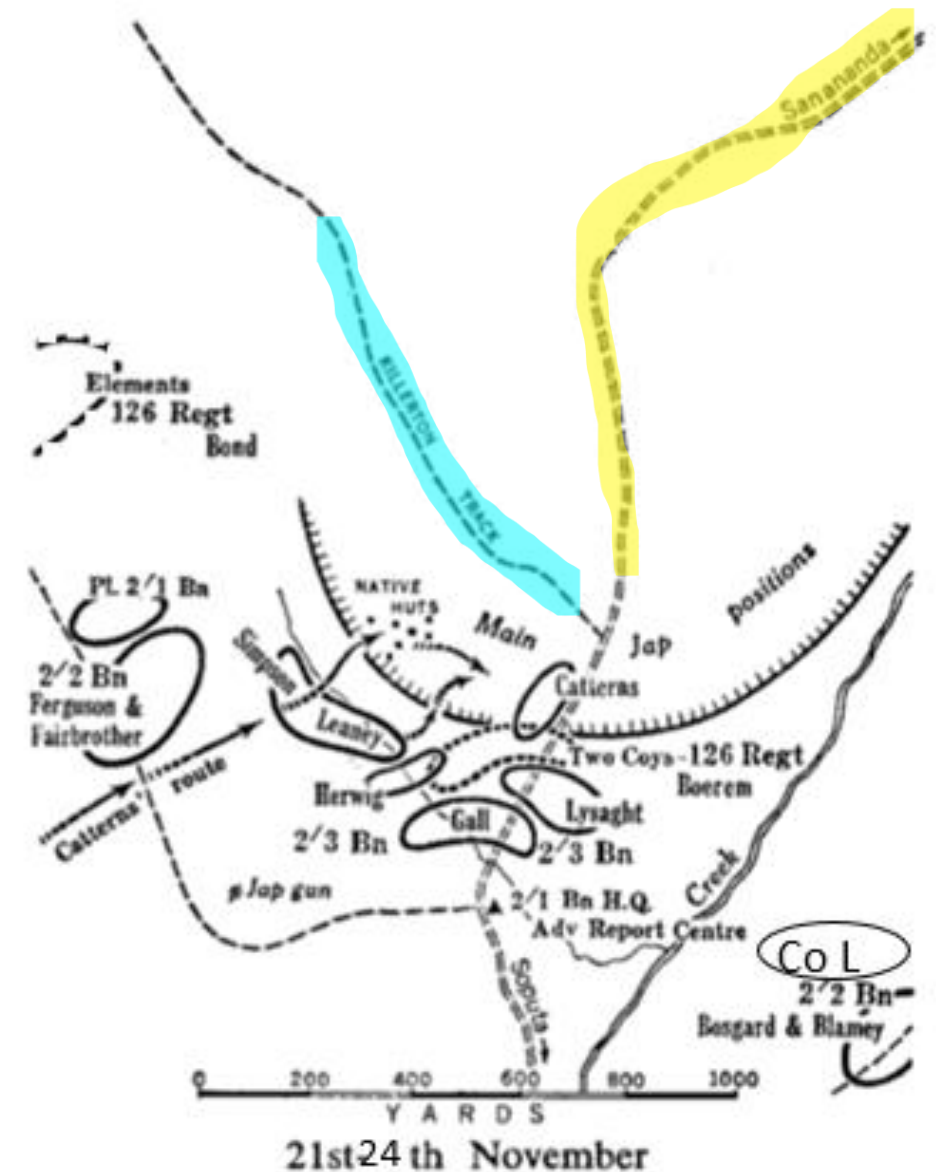
- Learning of the new setback to Companies I & K, Colonel Tomlinson, who had counted on finally attacking on 25 November, at once ordered Major Bond forward to take command of the two scattered companies and to attack on the 26th.
- On the right Company L had been making virtually no progress. By the evening of 24 November, it was just where it had been on the evening of the 22d—on the outskirts of the rice dump, about 200 yards from its line of departure.





# 24th Nov – Sanananda

- A new movement was now (24<sup>th</sup>) under way. A composite company from the 2/3rd Battalion under Captain Walker were to break bush round the left flank until they cut the track which branched left to Cape Killerton.
- They would then swing right again to cut the **main track** about one mile north of its junction with the **Killerton Track**, which junction was the present American objective.
- The patrol was to stay out for six or seven days if necessary. And with these instructions Walker set out at 9.45 a.m. ninety-one strong. They carried four days' hard and three days' emergency rations.



# 24 November – Gona

- As darkness fell on the 23rd, before the moon rose, Eather withdrew the 2/31st Battalion from within forty yards of the Japanese to the rear of the 2/33rd on the main track.
- Lt-Col Cameron led his 3rd Battalion into the area and, although their numbers were now only approximately 180, Eather proposed to use them to give a fresh twist to his tactics—to move them across Gona Creek and try the defences from the west.
- As an additional new factor he determined fully to exploit the possibilities of the available air support. His request that the most intense air efforts which could be mustered should be levelled at the Gona area between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the 24th was granted and he was told to withdraw his troops to a safe distance to allow the air attackers full play.
- First, aircraft strafed the defenders and attacked with light bombs until about 11.30 a.m. Then the heavy bombers got to work between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. with sorties so well directed that comparatively few bombs fell outside the target areas.
- These left the Japanese with little stomach for ground fighting during the day and gained a substantial rest for the tired Australians.

# November - Air

- General Harmon (photo) had analysed the performance of the 11<sup>th</sup> Bomb group's B17s and reported on it to COMSOPAC and General Arnold.
- The attacks by B-17s against the convoy on the 14<sup>th</sup> had resulted in no more than 1.1 per cent direct hits, which he viewed as less than a distinguished performance.
- The 15<sup>th</sup> had yielded a better score. 2.5 per cent of the bombs dropped were hits, but some of those hits had been made on a beached transport or on ships dead in the water.
- In the Solomons operations, always it was maneuvering surface craft which defied the bombardiers.



# November - Air

- Of all bombs dropped against maneuvering enemy surface craft during the early months of the campaign, slightly less than 1 per cent was classified as hits, although the inclusion of those listed as probable hits would bring the figure up to 2.5 per cent.
- Harmon had advised the 11th Group commander of the necessity of inflicting more damage upon the enemy if “we are to justify the effort we are putting into our B17 operations.”
- He did not urge a prodigal expenditure of planes and crews, but in view of the remarkably light loss sustained from enemy fire, the planes must be prepared to bomb from dangerously low altitudes.
- It was a pressing matter. Vital enemy land installations lay beyond the reach of any considerable bombing and it was only through his seaborne tentacles that the enemy could be hurt seriously.
- General Harmon was not prepared to accept the doctrine of skip bombing with 4-second fuzes, but he did feel that Saunders should be ready to employ the B-17 in this manner in emergencies.

# November - Air

- In Washington, General Arnold was perturbed over the failure to strike in strength at surface targets during the great convoy action of mid-November.
- It was most irksome for air commanders to watch their B17 crews devoting so much effort to reconnaissance activity, yet no other aircraft on hand could press home an effective search in the face of air opposition.
- General Arnold was reluctant to accept what he believed to be a misdirection of his offensive strength. Seriously disturbed by Harmon's reports, he undertook to persuade Admiral King to throw more of the South Pacific's sixty-eight PBY's into reconnaissance.





# 24 November – Air

- On the 24<sup>th</sup> (November) the squadron (No 4 RAAF) was given its first attack mission:
- two flights of three aircraft, each carrying two 250-lb bombs and 1,200 rounds of .303-inch ammunition, strafed and divebombed targets in the Gona area.
- One aircraft returned with engine trouble but the other five completed their task effectively.



*(Australian War Memorial)*

An R.A.A.F. Wirraway comes in at tree-top level to machine-gun Japanese positions at Gona.

# 24 November – Air

- On 24th November American and Australian aircraft assaulted the whole front with repeated bombing attacks which caused an Australian Army diarist to record that "the ground actually shook at times with the bomb blasts".



*(Australian War Memorial)*  
Allied aircraft bomb Japanese positions in bush near Gona.

# 24 November – Air

- On 24th November Capt Kenneth McCuller, pilot of one of seven Flying Fortresses sent to attack five Japanese destroyers in the Huon Gulf, made his first bombing run at only 200 feet.
- When antiaircraft shells hit and started a fire in the tail of the aircraft, McCuller pulled out while the tail gunner smothered the flames, and then turned in for another attack.
- On this run three members of the crew received slight wounds.
- In a third run an engine was hit.
- In the fourth attack a second engine was put out of action.
- The crew claimed hits on at least two destroyers and managed to reach base.



# 24 November – Air

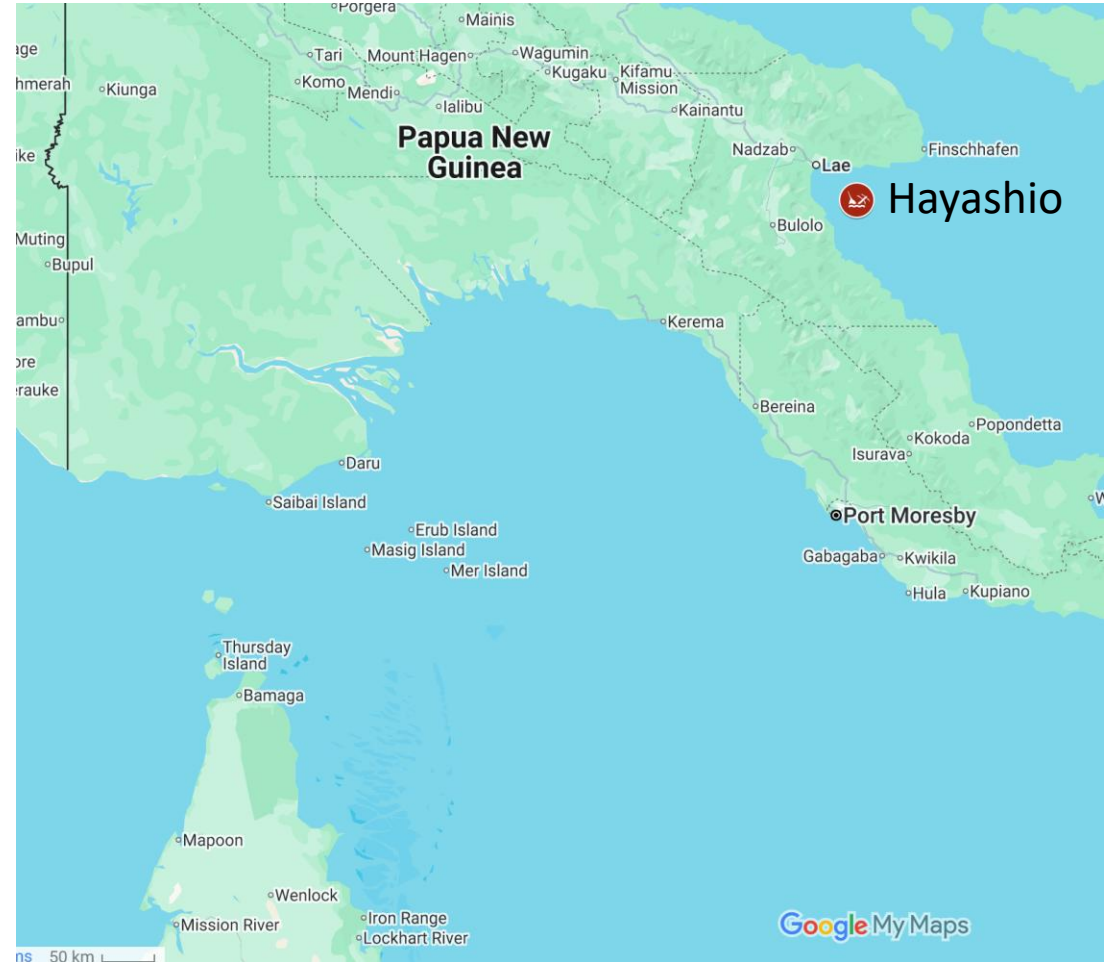
- That night (24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> Nov) 9 Beauforts from No. 100 Squadron were sent out from Milne Bay, 5 with torpedoes and 4 with bombs.
- One Beaufort, with a torpedo on board, caught fire when the engines were started up. The squadron torpedo section ran to the burning aircraft and at considerable risk removed the torpedo from its rack.
- Four aircraft failed to find the target in the darkness and cloud.
- One crew found a destroyer on fire with other destroyers standing by and made a torpedo attack but observed no results.
- The crews of two other Beauforts also sighted three destroyers and a direct bomb hit was claimed on one of them.



- The remaining two Beaufort crews also reported sighting a burning destroyer which was later seen to blow up.
- One of the Beauforts, piloted by Sergeant Duncan, failed to return.

# 24 November - Sea

- The Japanese destroyer Hayashio was bombed and damaged in Huon Gulf (07°00'S 147°30'E) by US Army B-17 Flying Fortress and B-25 Mitchells and RAAF Beaufighter aircraft on 24 November.
- The destroyer Shiratsuyu rescued the survivors and then scuttled her with a torpedo.
- At least one other destroyer was believed damaged.





# 25 November – Air

- Five Australian Hudsons attacked the airfield at Dilli night of 23/24 Nov.
- Allied aircraft hit Sanananda Pt, Buna area, Sanananda-Soputa trail S of Sanananda, and area between Cape Killerton and Sanananda Pt. Anti aircraft and mortar positions were silenced, buildings and ammunition dumps were left burning. 108 sorties were flown, 29 B25s, 25 B17s, 15 Beaufighters, 13 A20s, 7 B26s, 5 Wirraways and 24 fighters.
- A large concentration of Allied planes also bomb 2 destroyers and a light cruiser off New Guinea between Lae and Finschhafen. Two destroyers were hit and a near miss scored on the cruiser. The cruiser and a surviving destroyer were last seen retiring at high speed.
- 26 enemy fighters were observed at Salamaua airfield, the first large concentration observed at this point.
- Allied fighters and heavy bombers attacked the airfield at Lae night of 24/25 Nov damaging a fighter, hitting a building and scoring ten hits on the runway with 1,000 pound bombs.

# 24 November – COIC

## IV. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

- (i) Further attempts to land supplies and reinforcements on Guadalcanal from submarines.
- (ii) Further attempts to reinforce New Guinea area.
- (iii) Divisionary activity in the Aleutians.
- (iv) Continued raider and submarine activity in the Indian Ocean.

TR.

For A/Director, C.O.I.C.

25/11/42

## APPENDUM

### INDIAN OCEAN:

S.S. "TILANA" (BR) 10,000 tons was torpedoed about midnight 23/11 in 007° 38' North 061° 08' East (690 miles west by north Malcolm Atoll, Maldive Is.).

# 25 November – Government

- H. E. Boote (photo), editor of the Australian Worker and veteran of the 1916 anti-conscription campaign, wrote, on 25<sup>th</sup> November, that the Prime Minister's proposal contravened the policy of the Labour movement.
- When Labor split over conscription in 1916 Boote became probably the foremost Australia-wide publicist for the 'No' case in the referenda.
- It has been said that no man at that time was 'more widely known and respected' in the labour movement.
- In November 1917 he was prosecuted under the War Precautions Act for publishing articles, notably 'The lottery of death', which were prejudicial to recruiting.



# 25 November – New Guinea, Buna E

- The 25 November, was quiet. No advance was attempted. The lull was being used to prepare for a co-ordinated attack on Cape Endaiadere and both ends of the New Strip, on the 26th, Thanksgiving Day.
- This was to be a strong effort. Eight artillery pieces—six 25-pounders and the two 3.7-inch howitzers—would be in support, four more 25-pounders having been brought in by air on the 25th and emplaced near Ango.
- A dozen 81-mm. mortars and several more heavy machine guns would be available, as well as thirty-five planes—the largest concentration of aircraft for an attack to date.
- High hopes were held for the success of the attack. General Harding left his headquarters at Embogo the night before to observe it personally. He caught a ride on the lugger *Helen Dawn*, which was carrying ammunition to the forward dump at Hariko.
- About seven miles out the lugger ran onto a sand bar, and General Harding had to complete the remaining three miles of his journey in a row boat and arrived at Colonel Hale's command post at Hariko at 04.45. After visiting Colonel McCoy and Colonel Carrier in their command posts, he moved on to Colonel Miller's CP.

## 25 November – New Guinea, Buna W

- General Harding now shared Colonel Smith's views about the impracticality of an attack on the right and the need to make the main effort on the left.
- General Harding, after a study of the trail which led from the left hand fork of the Triangle to Buna, had convinced himself that it would be possible to bypass the Triangle and at the same time take both the village and the mission, if troops could be gotten onto the large grassy area northwest of the Triangle through which, in his own phrase, "the left hand road to Buna" ran.
- He therefore ordered Smith to contain the Triangle with a portion of his troops and to deploy the rest in the swamp south of the grassy area in question, preparatory to seizing it and moving westward on Buna Village.



# 25th November – New Guinea, Sanananda

- The next day, 25 November, the 25-pounders and the mortars gave the Japanese positions a thorough going over. In the process, however, an 81-mm. mortar shell fell short and landed in the command post that Captain Lee was sharing with Captain Blamey. Blamey and one other Australian were killed, and Captain Lee and five others—Australians and Americans—were wounded.
- Captain Bosgard took over command of the Australians in the area, and Maj. Bert Zeeff of the Americans. Major Zeeff, executive officer of the 3d Battalion, went forward that night from battalion headquarters and reached the plantation area with a few men from Battalion Headquarters Company at about 0100 on the 26th.
- On the left Lytle and Shirley, their companies now merged, continued their effort to reach the track. Major Bond, the battalion commander, personally took command there.

# 25th November – New Guinea, Gona

- Late on the 25th Eather tried his new stroke (slightly modified) with the fresh 3rd Battalion.
- At 4 p.m. they attacked Gona from the south-west supported by machine-gun and mortar fire from the 2/25th and 2/33rd and by artillery fire from the four 25-pounders of the 2/1st Field Regiment **sited forward of Soputa.**
- Although they succeeded in penetrating the defences to a depth of some 50 yards at one point, strong positions, well dug and roofed, defied them;
- at 5.40 p.m. they withdrew, their casualties having been comparatively light.



# 25th November – New Guinea, Gona

- On 25th November Lieut-Colonel Challen, who had returned from Chaforce on the 2nd, had emplaned with the 2/14<sup>th</sup> battalion, the first unit of 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade, at Port Moresby. Some 350 all ranks were flown to the north coast. The last of them reached Popondetta late on the 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Forward medical arrangements were in the hands of Lieut-Colonel Hobson and his 2/4th Field Ambulance. Hobson's men established staging posts at intervals along the two routes of advance forward from the Kumusi (to Soputa and to Gona) and, on 21st November, had formed a Main Dressing Station at Soputa to serve both the 16th and 25th Brigades.
- Within four days ( on the 25<sup>th</sup>) they were holding, at the M.D.S. and in their various staging posts, 638 wounded and sick. Their position improved greatly, however, after the beginning of air evacuation from Popondetta about the 23rd.

# 25th November – Air

- Next day (25<sup>th</sup>) it was learned that Duncan had put the Beaufort down near Cape Vogel, on the shore of Collingwood Bay, and that, though injured, the crew were able to make their way to Wanigela.
- Early in the day the enemy destroyers were assigned to Hudsons of No. 6 Squadron as a target. The commanding officer, Wing Commander Barlow, led six aircraft off to find them.
  - Barlow was forced by mechanical trouble to return and make a crash landing at the Seven Mile—now known as Jackson's—which he did without injury to crew or himself.
  - The other five crews found the probable target area weather-bound and so did not sight any enemy ships.
- Six Australian Beaufighters strafed Baucau and Vinilile (Timor).
- The Buna area was repeatedly bombed and strafed by strong forces of allied fighters and heavy and medium bombers. As many as 34 planes participated in one raid. Fourteen AA positions were silenced, a number of bombs hit the dispersal area at the airfield and a fuel dump was set on fire.
- Salamaua was bombed by 5 B26s without known results.
- Four P40s escorting air transports near Buna attacked eight zeros, destroying five. One transport plane was lost.
- Four P-38's hit A/F at Lae.
- A lone B-25 scores hit on cruiser off Tami I.
- On the 25th 7 B25s and 13 P40s raided Sianning (railway 50 miles south of Hankow) scoring hits on the railway, a barracks and a factory.
- Two Japanese bombers attacked Port Moresby airfields night of 24/25. Slight damage.

# 25 November – War Dept report to White House

## PACIFIC AND SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREAS

In his operations summary for November 23, General MacArthur reports that the 7th Australian Division is pressing its attack on a small pocket of Japanese isolated near Gona and on the Soputa-Sanananda road. The US 32d Division is making slow progress on a front just south of Buna. The Allied force in Timor is being harassed by Japanese and armed natives. Our bombers attacked Kavieng, Sanananda, Lae, also Penfoei and Lautem (Timor). Results were generally unobserved although fires were started on Timor. One Zero was shot down.



# 26 November - Government

- On 26 November Curtin makes statement on successful action by *HMAS Bengal* and the Dutch tanker *Ondina* in the Indian Ocean, against two heavily armed Japanese raiders.
- Mrs Curtin had launched the Bengal.



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Generals Bennet and Lloyd chatting to Curtin while waiting for troops to march past in Perth Nov 42.

# 26th November – Sea

- The corvettes Cessnock and Toowoomba and the cruisers Adelaide (photo) and Jacob van Heemskerck were escorting convoy "OW 1" to the limits of the Australia Station, where they were to hand over to H.M.S. Gambia for onward passage.
- On 26th November they were two days out of Fremantle proceeding N.W. by W at 9 knots. At 2.16 p.m. Adelaide's masthead lookout sighted a ship fine on the port bow.
- Adelaide and Jacob van Heemskerck proceeded to investigate, leaving the corvettes with the convoy.
- Six minutes after being sighted' The ship altered course away, and shortly broadcast a "raider" distress signal in the name of Taiyang—"followed by suspicious craft".

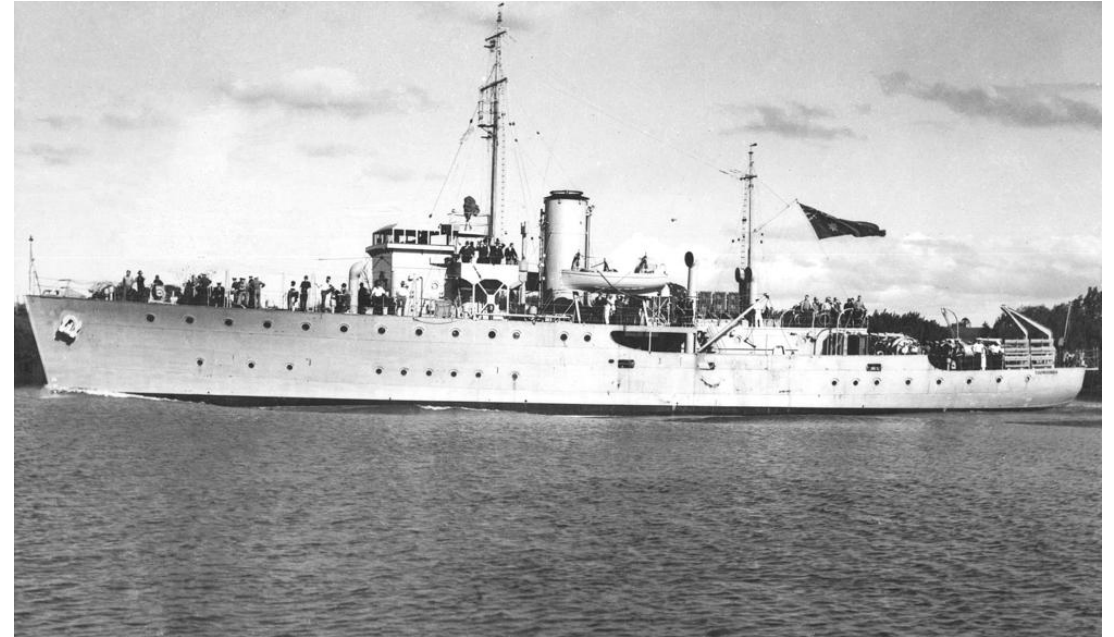


# 26th November – Sea

- Adelaide went to action stations—range then 15,000 yards. The ship made no answer to various visual and wireless signals sent to her but was seen to lower two boats.
- At 3.43 an explosion was observed aft in the ship and almost immediately a dense cloud of smoke appeared at the stern and covered the whole of the port side, leaving only the masts and top of the funnel visible.
- Adelaide at once opened fire, on the assumption that one of two things had happened: the ship was an armed raider, had sent away a "panic party" in boats and started a smoke screen to hide preparations for an attack on Adelaide; or the ship was unarmed, had blown scuttling charges, and had abandoned ship.
- "The answer in both cases," said Esdaile in his report, "was considered to be to open fire, (a) for obvious reasons, and (b) to hasten the end and enable me to get back to the convoy which by this time was hull down".
- Fire, which was opened at 3.44 p.m. at 10,600 yards, ceased at 3.52 p.m., at which time the ship suddenly sank by the stern. Adelaide picked up survivors before rejoining the convoy to which Jacob van Heemskerck (who had also opened fire) had proceeded as soon as the target sank.
- There were no casualties on either side as the result of this encounter. The survivors picked up by Adelaide comprised 78 Germans, 10 Norwegians from ships Aust, 5,630 tons (sunk by Thor on 3rd April 1942) and Kattegat, 4,245 tons (sunk by Michel on 20th May 1942) also "one pig and one dog".

# 26th November – Sea

- The ship was the German blockade runner Ramses. A motor ship of 7,983 tons, she left Hamburg on an ordinary trading voyage on 1st July 1939. She reached Shanghai in August 1939 and remained in the Pacific—the greater part of the time lying in Yokohama, serving as a prison ship for raider prisoners.
- On the 23rd of November she sailed from Batavia fully loaded, mainly with rubber and whale oil, to run the blockade to Bordeaux.
- Unarmed except for some anti-aircraft machine-guns, she relied for her protection on a constant and keen lookout and evasive action were any ship sighted. If this failed, scuttling charges were in position for immediate self destruction.
- After handing the convoy over to the ocean escort Toowoomba (photo) and Cessnock, two new corvettes built for the Admiralty account went on to join the Eastern Fleet.



# 26th November – Sea

- On 26th November Intelligence indicated an enemy intention to run troops and supplies into Buna by submarines on the night 28th-29th.

## IV. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVES.

- (i) Further attempts to land supplies and reinforcements on Guadalcanal from submarines.
- (ii) Further attempts to reinforce New Guinea area.
- (iii) Diversionary activity in the Aleutians.
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T.R.

For A/Director, C.O.I.C.

26/11/42.

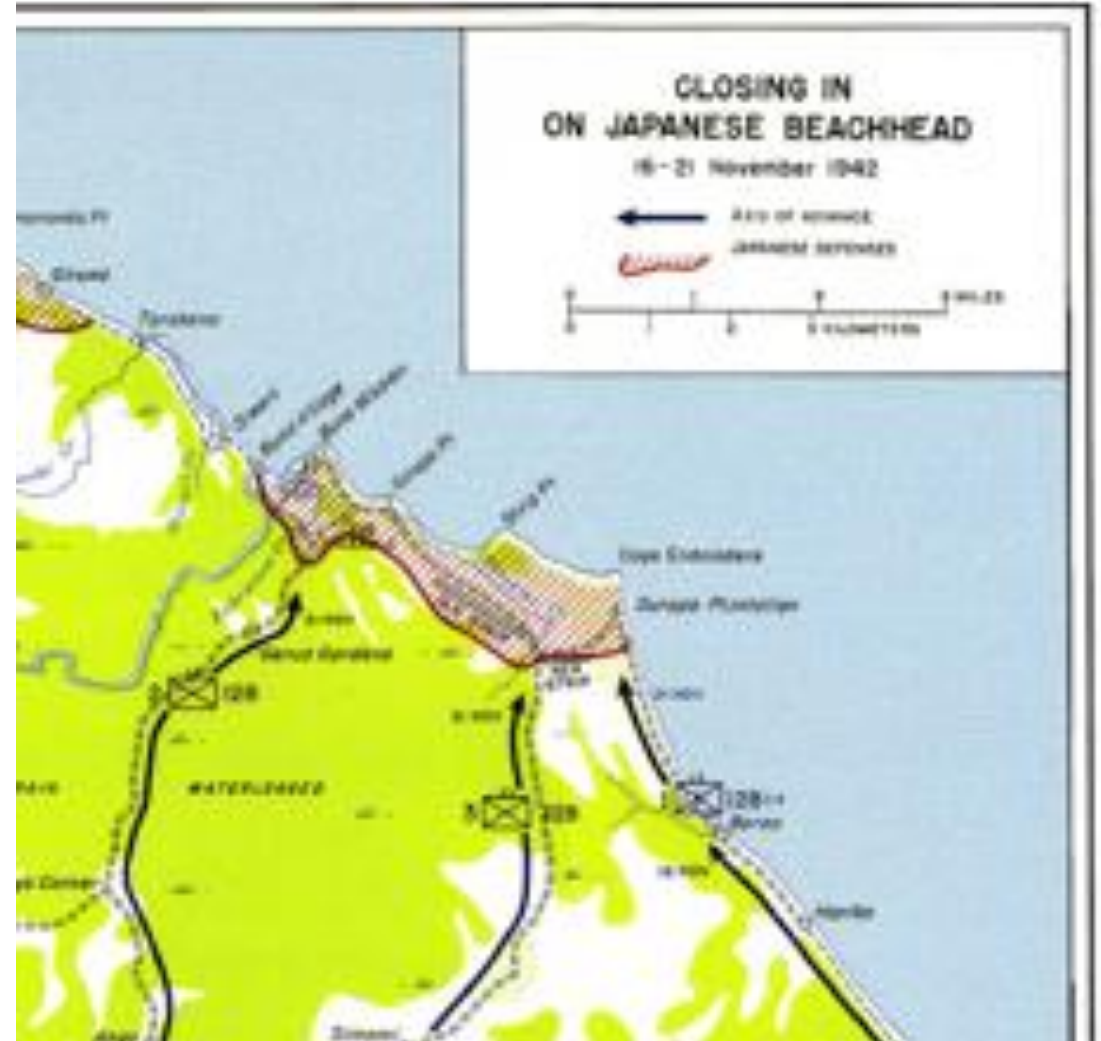
# 26 November – New Guinea, Buna E

- Warren Force attacked again on the 26th. Col Miller's III/ 128th had relieved Col McCoy's I/ 128th in the most advanced positions along the water's edge.
- Forward of Miller, at 7.30 a.m., the Allied fighters opened what was to be the largest air attack yet undertaken on the coast. Bombers followed them in at 8 a.m., and the attacks continued until 9 a.m., fifty aircraft in all participating.
- Then the guns took over: O'Hare's howitzers concentrated on Cape Endaiadere; Manning's Bullforce, with four 25-pounders now in action round Ango, and Mueller's two 25-pounders from Hariko, brought their fire down along the western edge of New Strip and on the bridge between the strips.
- Twelve 81-mm mortars and four heavy machine-guns thickened the artillery fire.
- At 9.30 a.m. Miller's battalion went in on the right to drive directly northward along the track to Cape Endaiadere. But the Japanese rose practically unscathed from their bunkers and strongpoints and stopped the Americans almost dead on the track and in the swamps which bordered it.



# 26 November – New Guinea, Buna E

- On his left Colonel Carrier's I/126th elements, aiming northwest for Strip Point, got lost.
- This left the Australian Independent Company right out on a limb as they tried to seal Carrier's left flank.
- Left of them again Fryday's company, still in their position on the approaches to the bridge, had failed to secure the western end of the strip.



## 26 November – New Guinea, Buna W

- Smith began deploying his troops in accordance with this plan early on 26 November. Company F, 128th Infantry, and Company G, 126th Infantry, moved into the area west of the bridge over Entrance Creek.
- The troops had scarcely begun moving when General Harding, who had for some time felt that the attack on the Urbana front was not being pressed with sufficient vigor, ordered his chief of staff, Col. John Mott, to that front. Mott's instructions were to take strong action when he got there and, if he thought the situation required it, to take command

# 26th November – New Guinea, Sanananda

- At daybreak, after a heavy mortaring of the plantation area by the Japanese, Zeeff inspected the Allied position. He found the Australians in the center of the line, with the Americans in a semicircular position on left and right. The Australians were behind a heavy log breastwork, which, as Zeeff recalls, was "grooved and creased" with enemy fire. It was clear to Zeeff that he would have to use some other axis of approach if he was to reach the track.
- Leaving part of Company L and twenty men from 3d Battalion headquarters in place in the plantation area, he recrossed the stream with the rest of his force, about 100 men, sideslipped along the stream for about 600 yards, and prepared to hit the enemy through the gap between Boerem's positions on the track and the allied right flank.

## 26th November – New Guinea, Sanananda

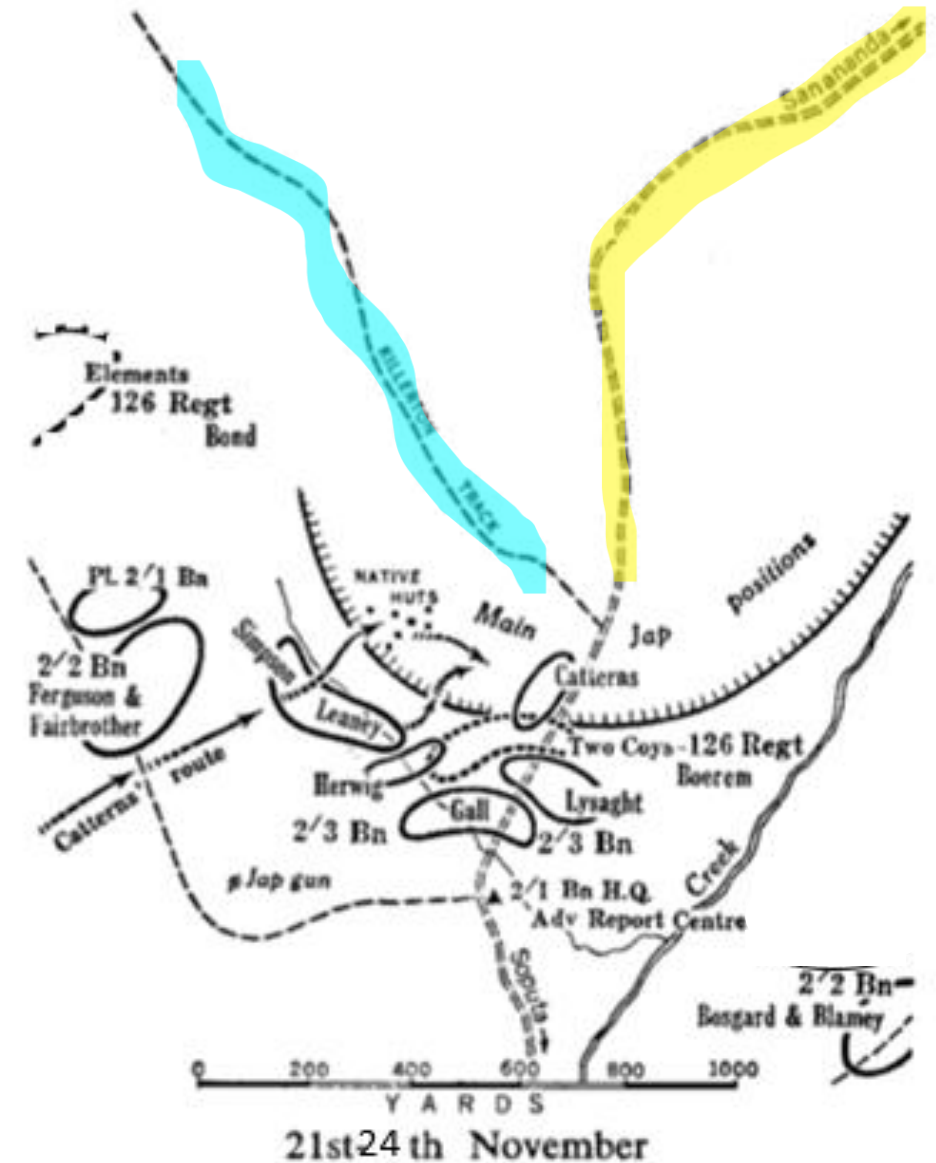
- The long-delayed attack was now finally ready. The 25-pounders and the mortars opened up about 1300, 26 November, shortly after Companies I and K, under Major Bond, pushed off to the eastward toward the Killerton trail. At 1320 the artillery and mortar fire ceased. Companies C and D, Major Boerem's two companies, attacked straight north along the track, and Company L under Major Zeeff, crossed the stream and pushed northwestward.
- Major Bond's eastward thrust hit stiff resistance. After several hours of indecisive fighting and the loss of five killed and twenty-three wounded, Bond's two companies consolidated about 700 yards west of the Killerton trail. Major Boerem's companies ran into such heavy machine gun and mortar fire that they were stopped after an advance of less than a hundred yards.

# 26th November – New Guinea, Sanananda

- Colonel Tomlinson, Captain Boice, Captain Dixon, and other members of the regimental staff who were observing Boerem's attack were pinned to the ground and managed to extricate themselves only after the enemy fire lifted.
- Zeeff did somewhat better. He pushed ahead for about 350 yards before running into heavy fire from several hidden machine guns that killed and wounded several of his men. The advance, which had begun so promisingly, was brought to a complete halt.
- The troops began aggressive patrolling to pinpoint the enemy positions, but so skillfully were they hidden that Zeeff's patrols could not at once locate them.
- Dusk came, and the troops dug in for the night in foxholes which immediately filled with water.

## 26th Nov – Sanananda

- At 5.30 p.m. Brigadier Lloyd had news from the special patrol of the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> they had reached the Killerton Track at 11.30 that day, but swamps blocked their eastward move.
- By this time, however, Lloyd had sent another patrol (from the 2/1st Battalion) into the same general area searching for additional information.
- General Vasey was chafing at the delay and was anxious to know whether he could get a really large body of troops round the left to cut the Sanananda Track in the vicinity of Cape Killerton.





# 26th November – New Guinea, Gona

- As the evening of the 26th was lengthening, after a quiet day in the forward Australian positions astride the main track south of Gona, the men of the 2/33rd were vigorously assailed with the bayonet by a strong fighting patrol which advanced under cover of heavy machine-gun and mortar fire.
- Recoiling from an uncompromising reception the Japanese tried to make their way round the 2/33rd's right flank but were blocked by the 2/25th.
- As night settled Buttrose and Marson had their men cutting coordinated lines of fire in preparation for further attacks, and from the sea there came the sound of Japanese barges approaching the beach for purposes which the Australians could only guess.

# 26th November – Air

- In an effort to break Japanese air superiority over Buna, Fifth AF P-40's, A-20's, and B-25's pound A/F and AA positions in the area B-26's strike Salamaua area. Six Beaufighter, 17 A20, 8 B25 and 15 P40 sorties.
- Night of 25/26 ten Australian planes attacked Novalusa and seven attacked Beco, Timor, causing fires and other damage to buildings.
- On 26 November the 3rd Reconnaissance Squadron of the Royal New Zealand Air Force arrived at Guadalcanal with its Lockheed Hudsons.
- Bangkok oil refineries were attacked by 9 B24s and numerous hits were scored in and around the target area.
- A B-24 reconnoitering Holtz Bay harbor, in the Aleutians spots shipping tgts which are subsequently hit by 4 B-26's escorted by 4 P-38's. 1 large vessel is claimed afire and sinking.
- The next day (26<sup>th</sup>) 8 B25s and 14 P40s attacked Yochow, scoring hits on waterfront buildings a railway station and enemy installations.

# 26th November – Air

- Buna - 8 Zeroes shoot down an allied transport aircraft 26/11. 4 P40s Intercepted and claimed 3 Zeroes destroyed and 2 probable.
- Dobodura - 4 Zeroes strafed the village afternoon 25/11 some casualties caused. 11 fighters strafed and bombed the area morning 26/11. Nil damage.
- Cape Endaidere - 4 Zeroes strafed the village morning 26/11. 6 Zeroes attacked the area afternoon 26/11.
- Darwin - 12 enemy aircraft attacked early morning 26/11. Slight damage.



Wirraway of No 4 Squadron RAAF on Popondetta Airstrip.

# 26th November – Air

- One of five (22 Squadron) Bostons that were on a bombing and strafing raid over Buna airstrip on 26th November, piloted by Squadron Leader McDonald, had just begun its bomb run when it was blown to pieces by an explosion. This was thought to have been caused by anti-aircraft fire.
- One more artillery piece, a 105-mm howitzer (photo) of the 129th U.S. Field Artillery Battalion, was landed at Dobodura on the 26<sup>th</sup> (November) together with its crew, a tractor and 100 rounds of ammunition.



# 26th November – Air

- No. 4 Squadron on 26th November, sent two detached flights to the other side of the Owen Stanleys.
- One of these was based at Dobodura for cooperation with the guns of Bullforce, the two guns of the 2/5th Field Regiment and the American 105-mm howitzer, and the other at Popondetta for service with Blackforce.
- For the operations over the Buna-Gona-Sanananda front all briefings and interrogations for both detached flights were done at Dobodura by the unit's army liaison officer, Captain O'Loan. He was in almost constant telephone communication with the two artillery troops and in radiotelephone contact with the Wirraway pilots when in flight, as were the artillery commanders themselves. When airborne the Wirraway so resembled the Zero in general silhouette that an altitude limit was imposed on it to avoid misleading Allied anti-aircraft gunners.
- Primarily the Wirraway crews' operations were concerned with tactical reconnaissance but they soon became recognised for their versatility and, their aircraft being the only ones based in the actual battle area, were very quickly in demand for a variety of combat tasks.

# 26 November - JIC

Tunisia. No further engagements are reported, as both sides continue building up their forces. Present Axis strength is estimated as 10,000 Germans and 6,500 Italians, with forty German and an unknown number of Italian tanks. The rate of Axis reinforcement is estimated as 1,000 men daily.

Prisoners from the 7th German Airborne Division have been taken in TUNISIA. They departed from France on 10 November and arrived by transport plane on 17 November.

Vichy France. It is now estimated that 10-12 German divisions, including three armored, are now in VICHY FRANCE (cf. Summary No 344). Three Italian divisions are there, including the Piave Division (the only available motorized division).

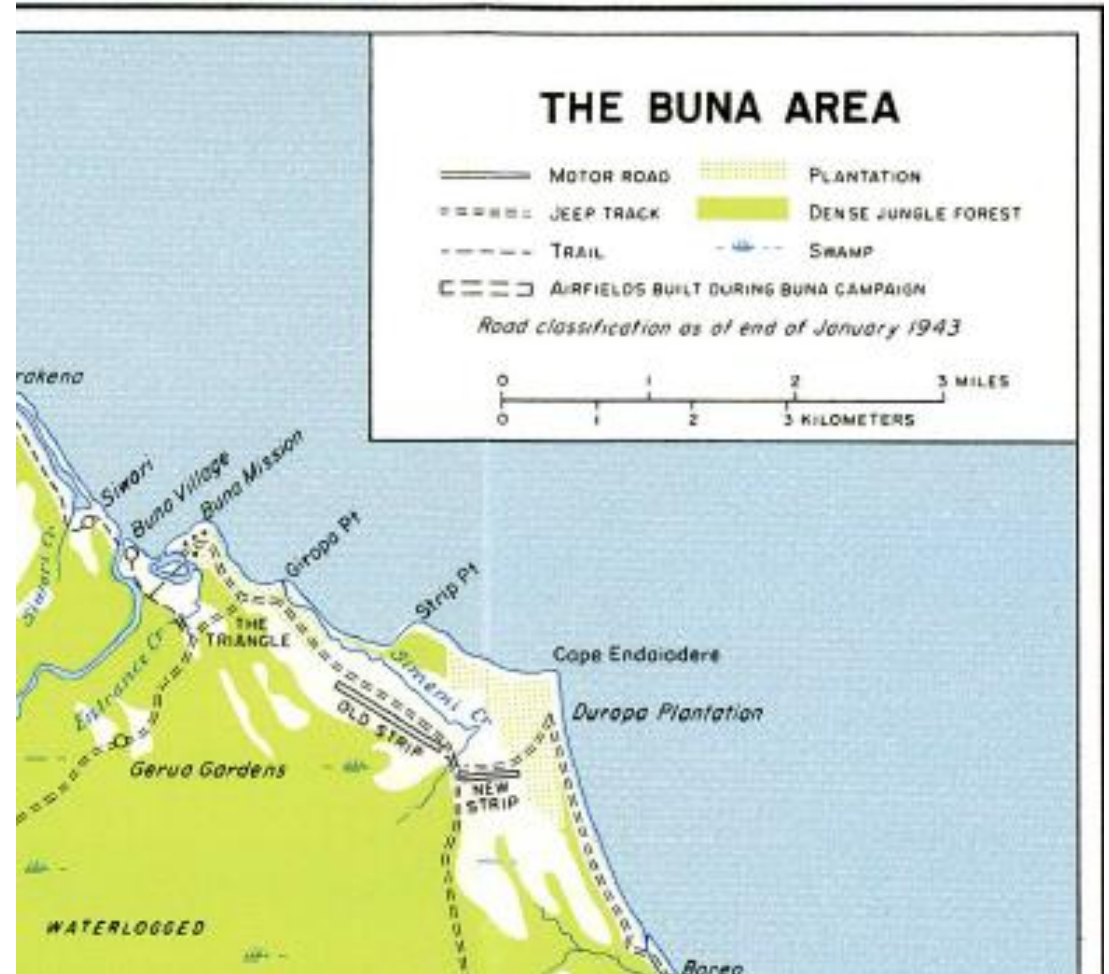


# 27 November - Buna E

- The next day (27<sup>th</sup>), Allied aircraft in the course of bombing Japanese positions along the New Strip dropped a string of demolition bombs on Lieutenant Fryday's position southwest of the strip. Three men were seriously wounded, and Fryday temporarily pulled his company back into the jungle, south of the position from which the first attack of the III, 128, had been launched on 19 November.
- On the Warren front, a lull followed the reverse of 26 November.

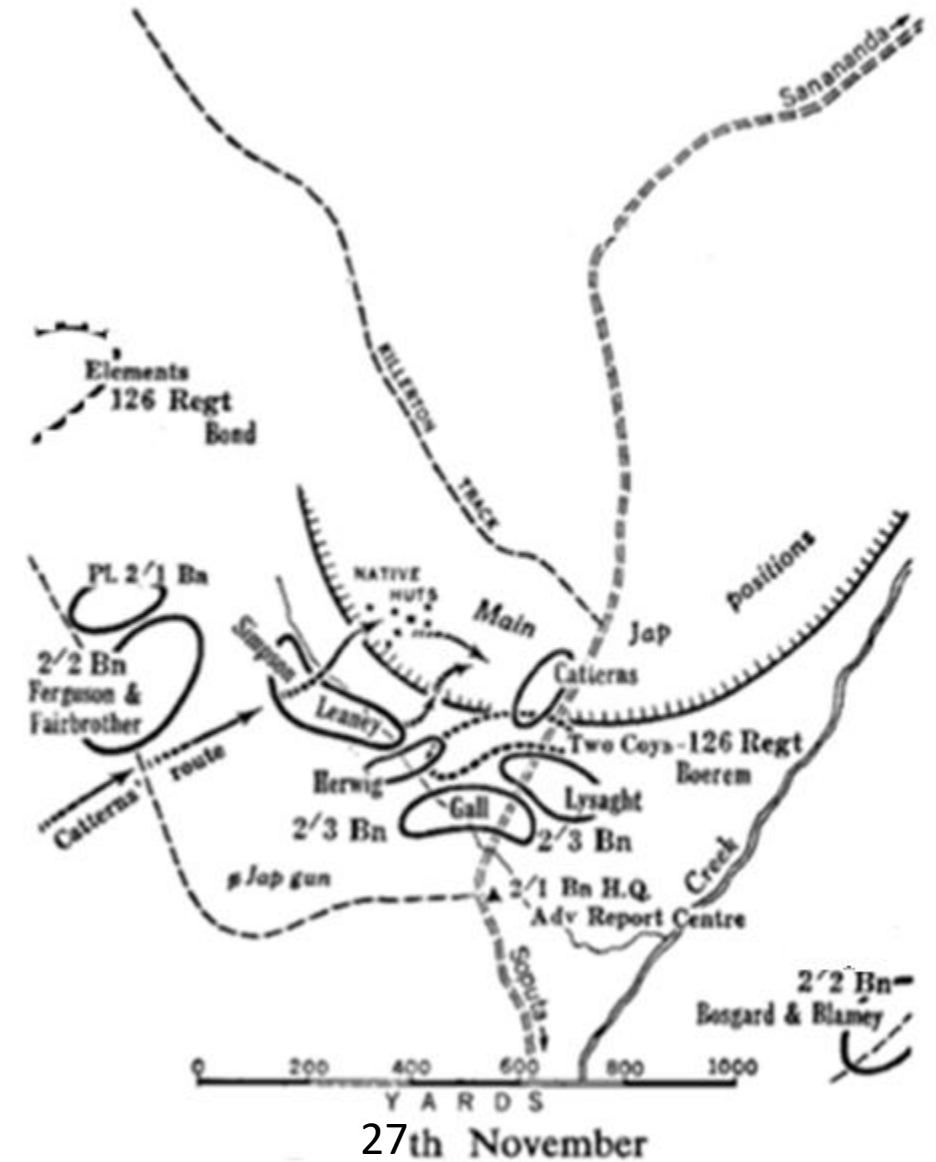
# 27 November – New Guinea, Buna W

- Colonel Mott reached Colonel Smith's command post on the afternoon of the 27th.
- Surveying the situation quickly, he came to the conclusion that he would have to assume command and did so at once. He relieved the captains of Companies E and G, 128th Infantry, of their commands and ordered them to take patrols into the area forward of the kunai flat from which the Japanese had driven Company E and the weapons platoon of Company G two days before.
- In addition, he ordered Companies E and G under their new commanders to retrieve their abandoned weapons on the kunai flat.
- They did so by sundown, but Company E returned without one of its mortars and had to be sent back again to get it.



# 27th Nov - Sanananda

- Early on 27 November Major Bond reported that, although everything on his front was at a stalemate, he was holding and preparing to attack.
- The next morning (27<sup>th</sup>), while Colonel Tomlinson was adding up his battle casualties (which by that time were more than 100 killed, wounded, and missing),
- the Cannon and Antitank Companies under Captain Medendorp finally reached Soputa from Wairopi.
- The men, exhausted and very hungry, were given food and allowed to rest, their first respite in some time.



# 27th November – New Guinea, Sanananda

- The Japanese attacked all day on 27 November. Their pressure was directed principally at Zeeff, whose forward perimeter was now between 300 and 400 yards from the track, but intermittent glancing blows were sent also against the Australian and American positions in the banana plantation.
- The heaviest attack of the day came toward evening. It was beaten off with the help of Major Hanson's 25-pounders and the excellent observation of one of Hanson's forward observers, Lt. Daniels, who was with Zeeff. Daniels switched the artillery fire from Zeeff's front to Bosgard's and back again to such good effect that the Japanese attack soon dwindled to nuisance fire only.
- In repelling the Japanese, Zeeff's troops suffered considerable casualties, and the Australians in the plantation area, now down to about fifty men, lost Captain Bosgard, whose death came only two days after Captain Blamey's.

# 27 November - Gona

- There was also a lull in the fighting at Gona on the 27th.
- On 27th November 13 Zeros bombed and strafed the Main Dressing Station and the American Clearing Hospital at Soputa. A low level reconnaissance of the medical centres had been made three days earlier.
- At the M.D.S., sited in a clearing by the roadside and practically void of cover, 22 Australians were killed; about 50 were wounded including patients, members of the field ambulance, visitors to the hospital, and natives.
- Among the killed were two well-loved Australian medical officers, Majors Vickery and McDonald, both of whom had done outstanding work during the campaign across the mountains.
- At the Clearing Hospital six Americans were killed.

# 27 November - Air

- Night of 26/27 US heavy bombers attacked Buin airfield, scoring 16 hits on the runway and starting large fires in the dispersal areas.
- RAAF planes raided enemy installations at Maobisse and in the Bacau area, Timor.
- B-26's pound Buna area, hitting buildings, A/F, and other tgts.
- Dive bombers and fighters bombed and strafed the Lae airfield, scoring direct hits on parked aircraft and starting large fires.
- 27/28 three Allied patrol bombers attacked the airfield at Kavieng, dropping bombs on the runway.
- On the 27th 12 Japanese bombers struck Hughes and Darwin, and at Hughes damaged two Hudsons.
- 10 B-25's and more than 20 P-40's, the largest CATF effort in China to date, hit shipping and harbor installations at Hong Kong, firing warehouses and claiming 2 freighters and numerous barges sunk. A large force of ftrs intercept during the return trip but are driven off by the escort. The P-40's and B-25's claim several airplanes shot down.



# 27 November - Air

- Average flying time between Port Moresby and Dobodura was 35 minutes and at times as many as 30 aircraft sortied in one day, some of them making as many as four or, weather permitting, even five flights in the day.
- The brunt of the transport burden was borne by No 374 Troop Carrier Group, to whose crews quite a large number of Australians had been seconded, chiefly as pilots. But the full task was greater than the group's capacity and there was urgent need for more aircraft.
- No. 6 Squadron's Hudsons were pressed into service, starting on 21st November when nine aircraft dropped supplies to Australian troops in the Buna area.
- By the end of the month the Hudsons had dropped 40,000 pounds of supplies.



Popondetta, Papua, 1942-12. A member of the 2/4th Field Ambulance takes a photograph of two of his colleagues standing beside the tail section of a USAAF C47 standing on the Popondetta airstrip.

# 27 November - JIC

- JIC Confirms German "definite defeat" at Stalingrad.
- Adm de Laborde orders French fleet at Toulon scuttled to prevent it from falling into German hands.
- Map legend
- Light Green- Under German/Italian Military occupation since June 1940.
- Dark Green – Vichy French state until November 1942, when it was occupied by the Germans & Italians in response to Allied invasion of French North Africa.



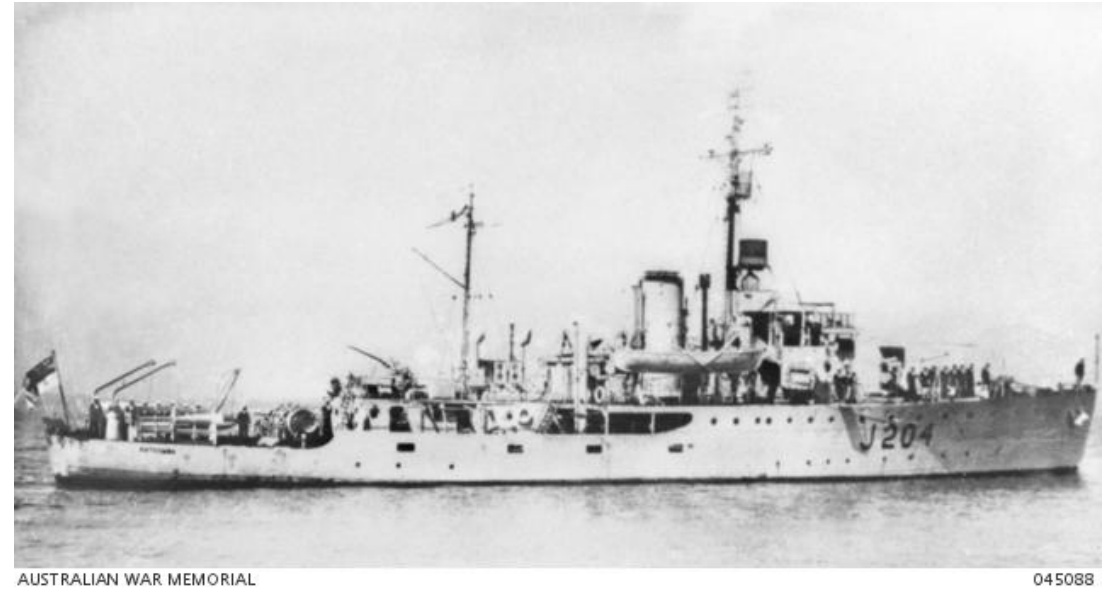
# 28th November – Sea

- An enemy convoy of three destroyers and two cargo ships left Buin am 27/11 probably for Munda.
- It was seen in the vicinity of Canongga Island probably on the return journey about 08.00/28.
- 5 B17s attacked the convoy at 12.25/28 and five hits with 200lb bombs were scored on one of the cargo vessels.
- Ten Zeroes intercepted. Three were shot down without damage to our aircraft.
- Subsequent sightings reported one ship on fire.



## 28th November – Sea

- HMA Ships Katoomba (photo) and Ballarat carried out an anti-submarine sweep of the Buna area during the night 28/29.
- They were attacked by enemy aircraft 14 miles north east of Buna.
- Katoomba suffered very minor damage but no casualties.
- One aircraft was shot down and others probably damaged.



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# 28th November – New Guinea, Buna E

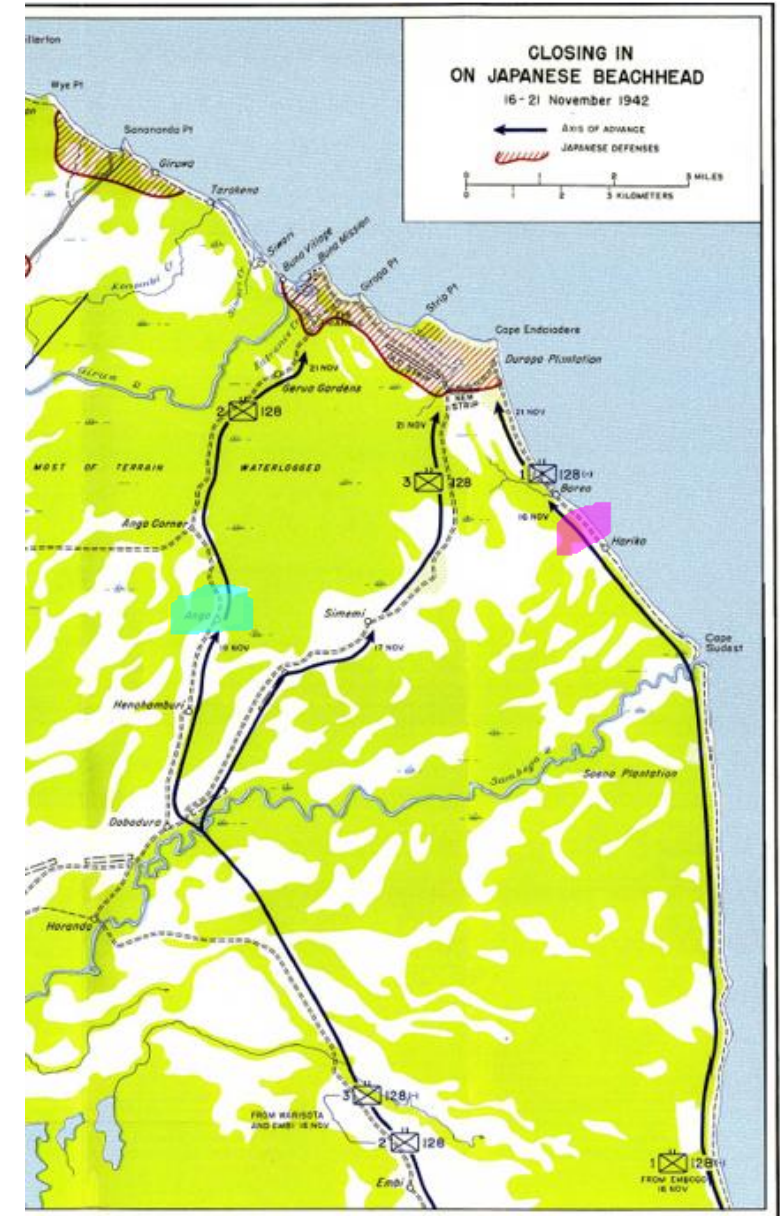
- General Harding (photo) ordered another Warren Force attack for the 29th but deferred it soon afterwards until the early morning of the 30th.
- Since Colonel Mott was preparing his Urbana Force attack for the night 29th-30th the effect would be an almost simultaneous attack on both flanks.





# 28th November - Buna E

- The attack on 30th was to be supported by more closely integrated artillery fire than previous attempts.
- The guns were still all Australian—Hall's two 25-pounders forward of Hariko, O'Hare's two howitzers in the same general area and Manning's four guns near Ango.
- The gunners were gradually overcoming the problems which beset them in the flat coastal country.
- Manning reported that at first he had no accurate maps at all of his area but was able to construct a fairly satisfactory one from air photographs.
- His chief difficulty was observation. "No command at all, practically impenetrable jungle with open strips and all perfectly flat."



# 28th November - Buna E

- On the 28th one of the No 4 Squadron Army Cooperation Wirraways was allotted to the 32nd Division, and one to the 7th Australian Division, to work with the artillery for two hours during the morning.
- As more guns arrived the supply of ammunition became a problem. Shells were flown to Dobodura and then carried along the track by four jeeps for the guns at Ango; they were taken by sea to the guns on the shore.
- “At night, ammunition was loaded into canvas assault-boats which were then pushed and pulled along the surf. The men watched anxiously for flares from Cape Endaiadere, for they would then be clearly visible to the enemy, who were strongly entrenched in that area.
- To pull an assault-boat along, one man had to walk in the water, chest-deep most of the way, well outside the line of breakers. There was about two miles to travel, and after a few hundred yards even the strongest was exhausted.
- If the boats were swamped it was a case of diving for the boxes which, when full of water, became harder than ever to handle.
- Once ashore, the ammunition would be carried to the guns through the jungle. Each man held the belt of the man ahead, the leader trying to follow the telephone line. If he lost the wire, the file would soon be off the track. Everyone would then crawl on hands and knees until the line was found again. It was only about a mile but it took up to two and a half hours in the dark.



## 28 November – New Guinea, Buna W

- Mott at once prepared to attack. He adopted a suggestion made to him by Major Smith, that the attack on the grassy strip leading to the village be mounted initially from two smaller grass strips just south of the larger kunai patch, and made his dispositions accordingly.
- Major Smith's battalion was ordered to assemble near the Girua River, directly below the two strips that Smith had proposed as the jump-off point for the attack.
- Company F, 128th Infantry, occupied the area west of the bridge over Entrance Creek.
- Companies G and H, under Colonel Smith, were ordered to take over the positions south of the Triangle in order to contain the enemy there.
- Company E, left in reserve, was deployed around task force headquarters.

# 28 November – New Guinea, Buna W

- Mott reported his dispositions to General Harding on the evening of 28 November, and the division commander approved them.
- Following a suggestion from General Herring that he try night attacks, Harding ordered an attack on Buna Village that night.
- Pleading that he was not ready to attack, Mott asked for a twenty-four-hour delay. Harding granted his request, and the attack was set for the night of 29-30 November.



Herring (second from left) in Papua in October 1942 with General Douglas MacArthur (centre) and Major General Allen (right).

# 28th November – New Guinea, Sanananda

- Zeeff had meanwhile been joined by seventy men from Major Boerem's detachment.
- Still facing the task of cleaning out the Japanese immediately to their front, the group spent the day of the 28th in patrolling and locating the hidden enemy positions.
- One of Zeeff's platoon leaders, 1st Lt. Crouch, accompanied by Lieutenant Daniels, stalked and ambushed a party of eight Japanese.
- In a particularly daring foray, Sgt. McGee of Company L led the patrol that located the main enemy position standing in the way of the advance and helped to wipe it out.

# 28th November – New Guinea, Gona

- In the afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup> the 2/14<sup>th</sup> was advancing to its start line for an attack on Gona along the beach from the east in the morning. Just before dark they encountered well concealed heavily dug in Japanese, who had not been identified by reconnaissance.
- The resulting confusion was exacerbated by the loss of a number of officers in the leading company.
- The battalion withdrew. Five officers and 27 men had been lost for no gain.
- Lt-Col Cooper had begun to emplane 2/27<sup>th</sup> battalion on the 25th and 21 officers and 353 men had been flown into Popondetta.
- He left the usual nucleus of old hands behind at Port Moresby and, with them, the reinforcements. These latter were to receive more intensive training before going into action.
- He moved his fighting strength from Soputa into brigade reserve at Gona on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

# 28th November – Air

- Eleven B-26's bomb A/F at Lae, several enemy fighters and dive bombers were destroyed.
- Seven A20s and four Beaufighters attacked Lae airfield evening 28/11. Direct hits on two grounded aircraft and other bombs fell among aircraft. Three fires caused and runway enveloped in smoke.
- Buna was attacked by seven B26s in the afternoon resulting in fires.
- Later in the day, 20 additional enemy fighters arrived at Lae and eight were operating over Buna in the evening.
- Japanese planes attacked Porlock Harbour and Milne Bay, but bombing was ineffective.
- Four Beaufighters and three Hudsons were over Timor bombing and strafing huts buildings and barges at Laga-Lavai and Maobisse.